

Fiction

Ten new stories by the world's best Science Fiction authors

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# NEW TALES OF SPACE AND TIME

Edited by  
RAYMOND J. HEALY

Introduction by  
ANTHONY BOUCHER

NEW TALES OF  
SPACE AND TIME • Edited by  
RAYMOND J. HEALY

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## New Tales of Space and Time

is *more* than a collection of Science Fiction stories. It is the *best* Science Fiction being written today! Here is the pick of action, humor, adventure and narrative science in a fascinating new field of storytelling.

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➤ If you like fiction, you will love this book. Especially when you get to Hollywood two hundred years from now, where happiness is enforced by law!

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These tales were written expressly for this collection. Not one has ever appeared in a magazine or other periodical before. *New Tales of Space and Time* was published originally in book form by Henry Holt and Company.

**— ABOUT THE COVER ILLUSTRATION**

The eye-catching illustration on the front cover of this book was awarded first prize in a contest sponsored by POCKET BOOKS, INC., at the Art Students League, New York City. The winning painting, executed by Charles Frank, a young student at the League, was selected from more than 150 sketches and 75 finished illustrations. Contest entries were limited to students at the League under the supervision of Mr. Frank Reilly, famous art instructor and nationally known illustrator.

**NEW TALES OF**  
**Space**  
**AND Time**

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**EDITED BY**  
**Raymond J. Healy**

**INTRODUCTION BY**  
**Anthony Boucher**



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## New Tales of Space and Time

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*This book is for Midge and David*





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RAYMOND J. HEALY

New York  
July, 1951



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# INTRODUCTION

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Critics often refer to “creative” anthology-making, meaning the exercise of taste and originality, the ability to shape a book that adds up to a little more than the sum of the stories it includes—as opposed to the hack practice of lazily lumping together the most familiar and available stories.

Raymond J. Healy has already proved himself a creative anthologist in this sense by his collaboration with J. Francis McComas in editing *Adventures in Time and Space* (Random House, 1946), still the basic collection for any science-fiction library. This time he’s gone a little further and created something which is, at least in the science-fiction field, completely new: an anthology of stories which have never before appeared in print anywhere.

And high time too; for the science-fiction anthology is, it must be admitted, getting into a pretty bad way. It’s hard to be precise at the time of writing this introduction; but this book will be at least the ninth, and possibly the tenth or eleventh, such collection published in 1951.

Now there simply are not that many magazine stories worth reprinting. (There are very nearly not that many magazine stories, period. A fan-writer once suggested, with some truth behind the joke, that the reason for the flood of new magazines was simply to provide stories for the next year’s anthologies.) Anthologies are becoming either trashy or repetitive; and readers must be a little tired, for instance, of finding Ray Bradbury’s *The Million Year Picnic* in its fourth reprinting, or of discovering that over fifty per cent of an otherwise admirable anthology is already on their shelves in other collections.

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The anthology of unpublished stories is an answer to this situation; and Healy and his contributors have tried at the same time to provide an answer to another problem of modern science fiction.

The past few years have seen two principal trends in fictional thinking about the future: an abject reliance on the coming superman, who will, singlehanded, bear all our burdens and solve all our dilemmas; or a despairing belief that man is going to hell in a chromium-plated plastikoid hand-basket, doomed to be the slave of his own machines—if he doesn't blow himself up first.

Frankly, we—Healy and I and the other writers here—have a little more faith in man than that; and we think that it's time that more of that faith should be expressed in fiction. Certainly some of the warnings of possible doom in the fiction of the '40s were healthy (if the superman-worship was not); but let us occasionally have a new tune in a major key. If pride is deadly to the soul of man, so also is despair.

The stories written for this book are intended to cover among them, with this fresher, more positive approach, the major themes of science fiction: space travel and time travel, robotics and cybernetics and all the rest. With these standard themes as springboards, the authors have taken off in various and sometimes surprising directions. You may even find it entertaining, as you read each story, to try to deduce the specific theme allotted to that author.

Without any specific allotment, the treatment of the stories has turned out to cover, like the themes, the entire range of science fiction. You'll find a detective melodrama and a pure farce, a quasi-historical document and a serious "quality" story—just about everything, in fact, except the Vaqueros-on-Venus space-opera and the technological essay masquerading as fiction.

For all of their positiveness, you'll find many of these

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stories markedly critical of the present state of man's world—many of the authors markedly unconvinced that contemporary American culture is the ultimate and unchangeable Way of Life.

That's as it should be. Science fiction is proud of being the ideologically freest form of popular entertainment—perhaps the only such form in which a man may advance whatever ideas he believes in, and in which his readers are as much interested in his ideas as in his plot. And it's as satisfying as it is paradoxical to see such a form growing in popularity in a period which otherwise tends toward increased timidity and conformity.

There's an advantage here too in the writing of stories directly for book publication, to escape even the very few taboos which exist in science-fiction magazines. At least three of the stories here, for one reason or another, could almost certainly never have appeared in any magazine in the field—including my own entry (and grateful I am to Healy for this opportunity to treat such a concept).

Major key and all, there's still a great deal of disagreement among the writers as to the nature of the closing cadence, the method of resolving man's discord. The suggestions range from a revitalization of religion to two different and equally extraordinary kinds of symbiosis. But little though the authors may agree on a solution, they do agree that man, shunning alike complacent pride in his present and fearful despair before his future, must strive toward some solution . . . and perhaps, as Goethe suggests in *Faust*, that that endless striving itself is the solution.

And in the meantime, you can go ahead and forget your own strivings for a few hours with a group of the most stimulating of recent stories of the imagination.

ANTHONY BOUCHER

*Berkeley, California*  
*September 5, 1951*





## Ray Bradbury HERE THERE BE TYGERS

---

*Interstellar travel is still a dream: a dream so far removed from our world of reality that only if we willingly suspend reason for the realm of fantasy can we really imagine ourselves cruising amongst the stars or landing from space ships on one of the myriad planets that undoubtedly circle them.*

*Ray Bradbury takes us to such a planet, far out in another star system, a planet the like of which has never to our knowledge been imagined. We're inclined to vote this one of the most unusual and wonderfully imaginative stories of the decade. And we'll wager you'd be glad to change places with the crewman who decided to desert ship!*

---

**“YOU HAVE TO BEAT** a planet at its own game,” said Chatterton. “Get in and rip it up, kill its snakes, poison its animals, damn its rivers, sow its fields, depollinate its air, mine it, nail it down, hack away at it, and get the hell out from under when you have what you want. Otherwise, a planet will fix you good. You can’t trust planets. They’re bound to be different, bound to be bad, bound to be out to get you, especially this far out, a billion miles from nowhere, so you get them first. Tear their skin off, I say. Drag out the minerals and run away before the damn world explodes in your face. That’s the way to treat them.”

The rocket ship sank down toward planet 7 of star system

84. They had traveled millions upon millions of miles; Earth was far away, her system and her sun forgotten, her system settled and investigated and profited on, and other systems rummaged through and milked and tidied up, and now the rockets of these tiny men from an impossibly remote planet were probing out to far universes. In a few months, a few years, they could travel anywhere, for the speed of their rocket was the speed of a god, and now for the ten thousandth time one of the rockets of the far-circling hunt was feathering down toward an alien world.

"No," said Captain Forester. "I have too much respect for other worlds to treat them the way you want to, Chatterton. It's not my business to rape or ruin, anyway, thank God. I'm glad I'm just a rocket man. You're the anthropologist-mineralogist. Go ahead, do your mining and ripping and scraping. I'll just watch. I'll just go around looking at this new world, whatever it is, however it seems. I like to look. All rocket men are lookers or they wouldn't be rocket men. You like to smell new airs, if you're a rocket man, and see new colors and new people if there are new people to see, and new oceans and islands."

"Take your gun along," said Chatterton.

"In my holster," said Forester.

They turned to the port together and saw the green world rising to meet their ship. "I wonder what *it* thinks of us?" said Forester.

"It won't like me," said Chatterton. "By God, I'll see to it it won't like me. And I don't care, you know, I don't give a damn. I'm out for the money. Land us over there, will you, Captain; that looks like rich country if I ever saw it."

It was the freshest green color they had seen since childhood.

Lakes lay like clear blue water droplets through the soft hills; there were no loud highways, signboards or cities. It's a sea of green golf links, thought Forester, which goes on forever. Putting greens, driving greens, you could walk ten thousand miles in any direction and never finish your game. A Sunday planet, a croquet-lawn world, where you could lie on

your back, clover in your lips, eyes half shut, smiling at the sky, smelling the grass, drowse through an eternal Sabbath, rousing only on occasion to turn the Sunday paper or crack the red-striped wooden ball through the wicket.

"If ever a planet was a woman, this one is."

"Woman on the outside, man on the inside," said Chatterton. "All hard underneath, all male iron, copper, uranium, black sod. Don't let the cosmetics fool you."

He walked to the bin where the Earth Drill waited. Its great screw-snout glittered bluely, ready to stab seventy feet deep and suck out corks of earth, deeper still with extensions into the heart of the planet. Chatterton winked at it. "We'll fix your woman, Forester, but good."

"Yes, I know you will," said Forester, quietly.

The rocket landed.

"It's too green, too peaceful," said Chatterton. "I don't like it." He turned to the captain. "We'll go out with our rifles."

"I give orders, if you don't mind."

"Yes, and my company pays our way with millions of dollars of machinery we must protect; quite an investment."

The air on the new planet 7 in star system 84 was good. The port swung wide. The men filed out into the greenhouse world.

The last man to emerge was Chatterton, gun in hand.

As Chatterton set foot to the green lawn, the earth trembled. The grass shook. The distant forest rumbled. The sky seemed to blink and darken imperceptibly. The men were watching Chatterton when it happened.

"An earthquake, by God!"

Chatterton's face paled. Everyone laughed.

"It doesn't like you, Chatterton!"

"Nonsense!"

The trembling died away at last.

"Well," said Captain Forester, "it didn't quake for us, so it must be that it doesn't approve of your philosophy."

"Coincidence," Chatterton smiled weakly. "Come on now, on the double, I want the Drill out here in a half hour for a few samplings."

"Just a moment." Forester stopped laughing. "We've got to clear the area first, be certain there're no hostile people or animals. Besides, it isn't every year you hit a planet like this, very nice; can you blame us if we want to have a look at it?"

"All right." Chatterton joined them. "Let's get it over with."

They left a guard at the ship and they walked away over fields and meadows, over small hills and into little valleys. Like a bunch of boys out hiking on the finest day of the best summer in the most beautiful year in history, walking in the croquet weather where if you listened you could hear the whisper of the wooden ball across grass, the click through the wicket, the gentle undulations of voices, a sudden high drift of women's laughter from some ivy-shaded porch, the tinkle of ice in the summer tea pitcher.

"Hey," said Driscoll, one of the younger crewmen, sniffing the air. "I brought a baseball and bat; we'll have a game later. What a diamond!"

The men laughed quietly in the baseball season, in the good quiet wind for tennis, in the weather for bicycling and picking wild grapes.

"How'd you like the job of mowing all this?" asked Driscoll.

The men stopped.

"I *knew* there was something wrong!" cried Chatterton. "This grass; it's freshly cut!"

"Probably a species of *dichondra*; always short."

Chatterton spat on the green grass and rubbed it in with his boot. "I don't like it, I don't like it. If anything happened to us, no one on Earth would ever know. Silly policy: if a rocket fails to return, we never send a second rocket to check the reason why."

"Natural enough," explained Forester. "We can't waste time on a thousand hostile worlds, fighting futile wars. Each rocket represents years, money, lives. We can't afford to waste *two* rockets if one rocket proves a planet hostile. We go on to peaceful planets. Like this one."

"I often wonder," said Driscoll, "what happened to all those lost expeditions on worlds we'll never try again."

Chatterton eyed the distant forest. "They were shot, stabbed, broiled for dinner. Even as we may be, any minute. It's time we got back to work, Captain!"

They stood at the top of a little rise.

"Feel," said Driscoll, his hands and arms out loosely. "Remember how you used to run when you were a kid, and how the wind felt. Like feathers on your arms. You ran and thought any minute you'd fly, but you never quite did."

The men stood remembering. There was a smell of pollen and new rain drying upon a million grass blades.

Driscoll gave a little run. "Feel it, by God, the wind. You know, we never have *really* flown by ourselves. We have to sit inside tons of metal, away from flying, really. We've never flown like birds fly, to themselves. Wouldn't it be nice to put your arms out like this—" He extended his arms. "And run." He ran ahead of them, laughing at his idiocy. "And fly!" he cried.

He flew.

Time passed on the silent gold wrist watches of the men standing below. They stared up. And from the sky came a high sound of almost unbelievable laughter.

"Tell him to come down now," whispered Chatterton. "He'll be killed."

Nobody heard. Their faces were raised away from Chatterton; they were stunned and smiling.

At last Driscoll landed at their feet. "Did you see me? My God, I flew!"

They had seen.

"Let me sit down, oh Lord, Lord." Driscoll slapped his knees, chuckling. "I'm a sparrow, I'm a hawk, God bless me. Go on, all of you, try it!"

"It's the wind, it picked me up and flew me!" he said, a moment later, gasping, shivering with delight.

"Let's get out of here." Chatterton started turning, slowly in circles, watching the blue sky. "It's a trap, it wants us all to fly in the air. Then it'll drop us all at once and kill us. I'm going back to the ship."

"You'll wait for my order on that," said Forester.

The men were frowning, standing in the warm-cool air, while the wind sighed about them. There was a kite sound in the air, a sound of eternal March.

"I *asked* the wind to fly me," said Driscoll. "And it *did*!"

Forester waved the others aside. "I'll chance it next. If I'm killed, back to the ship, all of you."

"I'm sorry, I can't allow this, you're the captain," said Chatterton. "We can't risk you." He took out his gun. "I should have some sort of authority or force here. This game's gone on too long; I'm ordering us back to the ship."

"Holster your gun," said Forester, quietly.

"Stand still, you idiot!" Chatterton blinked now at this man, now at that. "Haven't you *felt* it? This world's alive, it has a look to it, it's playing with us, biding its time."

"I'll be the judge of that," said Forester. "You're going back to the ship, in a moment, under arrest, if you don't put up that gun."

"If you fools won't come with me, you can die out here. I'm going back, get my samples, and get out."

"Chatterton!"

"Don't try to stop me!"

Chatterton started to run. Then, suddenly, he gave a cry.

Everyone shouted and looked up.

"There he goes," said Driscoll.

Chatterton was up in the sky.

Night had come on like the closing of a great but gentle eye. Chatterton sat stunned on the side of the hill. The other men sat around him, exhausted and laughing. He would not look at them, he would not look at the sky, he would only feel of the earth, and his arms and his legs and his body, tightening in on himself.

"God, wasn't it perfect!" said a man named Koestler.

They had all flown, like orioles and eagles and sparrows, and they were all happy.

"Come out of it, Chatterton, it was fun, wasn't it?" said Koestler.

"It's impossible." Chatterton shut his eyes, tight, tight. "It can't do it. There's only one way for it to do it; it's alive. The air's alive. Like a fist it picked me up. Any minute now, it can kill us all. It's alive."

"All right," said Koestler, "say it's alive. And a living thing must have purpose. Suppose the purpose of this world is to make us happy."

As if to add to this, Driscoll came flying up, canteens in each hand. "I found a creek, tested and pure water, wait'll you try it!"

Forester took a canteen, nudged Chatterton with it, offering a drink. Chatterton shook his head and drew hastily away. He put his hands over his face. "It's the blood of this planet. Living blood. Drink that, put that inside and you put this world inside you to peer out your eyes and listen through your ears. No thanks!"

Forester shrugged and drank.

"Wine!" he said.

"It can't be!"

"It *is*! Smell it, taste it! A rare white wine!"

"French domestic." Driscoll sipped his.

"Poison," said Chatterton.

They passed the canteens around.

They had idled on through the gentle afternoon, not wanting to do anything to disturb the peace that lay all about them. They were like very young men in the presence of great beauty, of a fine and famous woman, afraid that by some word, some gesture, they might turn her face away, avert her loveliness and her kindly attentions. They had felt the earthquake that had greeted Chatterton, thought Forester, and they did not want earthquake. Let them enjoy this Day After School Lets Out, this fishing weather. Let them sit under the shade trees or walk on the tender hills, but let them drill no drillings, test no testings, contaminate no contaminations.

They found a small stream which poured into a boiling water pool. Fish, swimming in the cold creek above, fell glittering into the hot spring and floated, minutes later, cooked, to the surface.

Chatterton reluctantly joined the others, eating.

"It'll poison us all. There's always a trick to things like this. I'm sleeping in the rocket tonight. You can sleep out if you want. To quote a map I saw in medieval history: 'Here there be tygers.' Some time tonight when you're sleeping, the tigers and cannibals will show up."

Forester shook his head. "I'll go along with you, this planet is alive. It's a race unto itself. But it needs us to show off to, to appreciate its beauty. What's the use of a stage full of miracles if there's no audience?"

But Chatterton was busy. He was bent over, being sick.

"I'm poisoned! Poisoned!"

They held his shoulders until the sickness passed. They gave him water. The others were feeling fine.

"Better eat nothing but ship's food from now on," advised Forester. "It'd be safer."

"We're starting work right now." Chatterton swayed, wiping his mouth. "We've wasted a whole day. I'll work alone if I have to. I'll show this damned thing."

He staggered away toward the rocket.

"He doesn't know when he's well off," murmured Driscoll. "Can't we stop him, Captain?"

"He practically owns the expedition. We don't have to help him, there's a clause in our contract that guarantees refusal to work under dangerous conditions. So . . . do unto this Picnic Ground as you would have it do unto you. No initial-cutting on the trees. Replace the turf on the greens. Clean up your banana peels after you."

Now, below, in the ship there was an immense humming. From the storage port rolled the great shining Drill. Chatterton followed it, calling directions to its robot radio. "This way, here!"

"The fool."

"Now!" cried Chatterton.

The Drill plunged its long screw-bore into the green grass. Chatterton waved up at the other men. "I'll show it!"

The sky trembled.

The Drill stood in the center of a little sea of grass. For a



moment it plunged away, bringing up moist corks of sod which it spat unceremoniously into a shaking analysis bin.

Now the Drill gave a wrenched, metallic squeal like a monster interrupted at its feed. From the soil beneath it slow bluish liquids bubbled up.

Chatterton shouted, "Get back, you fool!"

The Drill lumbered in a prehistoric dance. It shrieked like a mighty train turning on a sharp curve, throwing out red sparks. It was sinking. The black slime gave under it in a dark pool.

With a coughing sigh, a series of pants and churnings, the Drill sank into a black scum like an elephant shot and dying, trumpeting, like a mammoth at the end of an Age, vanishing limb by ponderous limb into the pit.

"My God," said Forester under his breath, fascinated with the scene. "You know what that is, Driscoll? It's tar. The damn fool machine hit a tar pit!"

"Listen, listen!" cried Chatterton at the Drill, running about on the edge of the oily lake. "*This* way, over here!"

But like the old tyrants of the earth, the dinosaurs with their tubed and screaming necks, the Drill was plunging and thrashing in the one lake from where there was no returning to bask on the firm and understandable shore.

Chatterton turned to the other men far away. "Do something, someone!"

The Drill was gone.

The tar pit bubbled and gloated, sucking the hidden monster bones. The surface of the pool was silent. A huge bubble, the last, rose, expelled a scent of ancient petroleum, and fell apart.

The men came down and stood on the edge of the little black sea.

Chatterton stopped yelling.

After a long minute of staring into the silent tar pool, Chatterton turned and looked at the hills, blindly, at the green rolling lawns. The distant trees were growing fruit now and dropping it, softly, to the ground.

"I'll show it," he said quietly.

"Take it easy, Chatterton."

"I'll fix it," he said.

"Sit down, have a drink."

"I'll fix it good, I'll show it it can't do this to me."

Chatterton started off back to the ship.

"Wait a minute now," said Forester.

Chatterton ran. "I know what to do, I know how to fix it!"

"Stop him!" said Forester. He ran, then remembered he could fly. "The A-Bomb's on the ship, if he should get to that . . ."

The other men had thought of that and were in the air. A small grove of trees stood between the rocket and Chatterton as he ran on the ground, forgetting that he could fly, or afraid to fly, or not allowed to fly, yelling. The crew headed for the rocket to wait for him, the captain with them. They arrived, formed a line, and shut the rocket port. The last they saw of Chatterton he was plunging through the edge of the tiny forest.

The crew stood waiting.

"That fool, that crazy guy."

Chatterton didn't come out on the other side of the small woodland.

"He's turned back, waiting for us to relax our guard."

"Go bring him in," said Forester.

Two men flew off.

Now, softly, a great and gentle rain fell upon the green world.

"The final touch," said Driscoll. "We'd never have to build houses here. Notice it's not raining *on* us. It's raining all around, ahead, behind us. What a world!"

They stood dry in the middle of the blue, cool rain. The sun was setting. The moon, a large one the color of ice, rose over the freshened hills.

"There's only one more thing this world needs."

"Yes," said everyone, thoughtfully, slowly.

"We'll have to go looking," said Driscoll. "It's logical. The

wind flies us, the trees and streams feed us, everything is alive. Perhaps if we asked for companionship . . .”

“I’ve thought a long time, today and other days,” said Koestler. “We’re all bachelors, been traveling for years, and tired of it. Wouldn’t it be nice to settle down somewhere? Here, maybe. On Earth you work like hell just to save enough to buy a house, pay taxes; the cities stink. Here, you won’t even need a house, with this weather. If it gets monotonous you can ask for rain, clouds, snow, changes. You don’t have to work here for anything.”

“It’d be boring. We’d go crazy.”

“No,” Koestler said, smiling. “If life got too soft, all we’d have to do is repeat a few times what Chatterton said: *‘Here there be tygers.’* Listen!”

Far away, wasn’t there the faintest roar of a giant cat, hidden in the twilight forests?

The men shivered.

“A versatile world,” said Koestler drily. “A woman who’ll do anything to please her guests, as long as we’re kind to her. Chatterton wasn’t kind.”

“Chatterton. What about him?”

As if to answer this, someone cried from a distance. The two men who had flown off to find Chatterton were waving at the edge of the woods.

Forester, Driscoll, and Koestler flew down alone.

“What’s up?”

The men pointed into the forest. “Thought you’d want to see this, Captain. It’s damned eerie.” One of the men indicated a pathway. “Look here, sir.”

The marks of great claws stood on the path, fresh and clear.

“And over here.”

A few drops of blood.

A heavy smell of some feline animal hung in the air.

“Chatterton?”

“I don’t think we’ll ever find him, Captain.”

Faintly, faintly, moving away, now gone in the breathing silence of twilight, came the roar of a tiger.

The men lay on the resilient grass by the rocket and the night was warm. "Reminds me of nights when I was a kid," said Driscoll. "My brother and I waited for the hottest night in July and then we slept on the Court House lawn, counting the stars, talking; it was a great night, the best night of the year, and now, when I think back on it, the best night of my life." Then he added, "Not counting tonight, of course."

"I keep thinking about Chatterton," said Koestler.

"Don't," said Forester. "We'll sleep a few hours and take off. We can't chance staying here another day. I don't mean the danger that got Chatterton. No. I mean, if we stayed on we'd get to liking this world too much. We'd never want to leave."

A soft wind blew over them.

"I don't want to leave now." Driscoll put his hands behind his head, lying quietly. "And it doesn't want us to leave."

"If we go back to Earth and tell everyone what a lovely planet it is, what then, Captain? They'll come smashing in here and ruin it."

"No," said Forester idly. "First, this planet wouldn't put up with a full-scale invasion. I don't know what it'd do, but it could probably think of some interesting things. Secondly, I like this planet too much; I respect it. We'll go back to Earth and lie about it. Say it's hostile. Which it would be to the average man, like Chatterton, jumping in here to hurt it. I guess we won't be lying after all."

"Funny thing," said Koestler. "I'm not afraid. Chatterton vanishes, is killed most horribly, perhaps, yet we lie here, no one runs, no one trembles. It's idiotic. Yet it's right. We trust *it*, and *it* trusts us."

"Did you notice, after you drank just so much of the wine-water, you didn't want more? A world of moderation."

They lay listening to something like the great heart of this earth beating slowly and warmly under their bodies.

Forester thought, I'm thirsty.

A drop of rain splashed on his lips.

He laughed quietly.

I'm lonely, he thought.

Distantly, he heard soft, high voices.

He turned his eyes in upon a vision. There was a group of hills from which flowed a clear river, and in the shallows of that river, sending up spray, their faces shimmering, were the beautiful women. They played like children on the shore. And it came to Forester to know about them and their life. They were nomads, roaming the face of this world as was their desire. There were no highways or cities, there were only hills and plains and winds to carry them like white feathers where they wished. As Forester shaped the questions, some invisible answerer whispered the answers. There were no men. These women, alone, produced their race. The men had vanished fifty thousand years ago. And where were these women now? A mile down from the green forest, a mile over on the wine stream by the six white stones, and a third mile to the large river. There, in the shallows, were the women who would make fine wives, and raise beautiful children.

Forester opened his eyes. The other men were sitting up. "I had a dream."

They had all dreamed.

"A mile down from the green forest . . ."

". . . a mile over on the wine stream . . ."

". . . by the six white stones . . ." said Koestler.

". . . and a third mile to the large river," said Driscoll, sitting there.

Nobody spoke again for a moment. They looked at the silver rocket standing there in the starlight.

"Do we walk or fly, Captain?"

Forester said nothing.

Driscoll said, "Captain let's stay. Let's never go back to Earth. They'll never come and investigate to see what happened to us; they'll think we were destroyed here. What do you say?"

Forester's face was perspiring. His tongue moved again and again on his lips. His hands twitched over his knees. The crew sat waiting.

"It'd be nice," said the captain.

"Sure."

"But . . ." Forester sighed. "We've got our job to do. People invested in our ship. We owe it to them to go back."

Forester got up. The men still sat on the ground, not listening to him.

"It's such a goddamn nice night," said Koestler.

They stared at the soft hills and the trees and the rivers running off to other horizons.

"Let's get aboard ship," said Forester, with difficulty.

"Captain . . ."

"Get aboard," he said.

The rocket rose into the sky. Looking back, Forester saw every valley and every tiny lake.

"We should've stayed," said Koestler.

"Yes, I know."

"It's not too late to turn back."

"I'm afraid it is." Forester made an adjustment on the port telescope. "Look now."

Koestler looked.

The face of the world was changed. Tigers, dinosaurs, mammoths appeared. Volcanoes erupted, cyclones and hurricanes tore over the hills in a welter and fury of weather.

"Yes, she was a woman all right," said Forester. "Waiting for visitors for millions of years, preparing herself, making herself beautiful. She put on her best face for us. When Chatterton treated her badly, she warned him a few times, and then, when he tried to ruin her beauty, she eliminated him. She wanted to be loved, like every woman, for herself, not for her wealth. So now, after she had offered us everything, we turn our backs. She's the woman scorned. She let us go, yes, but we can never come back. She'll be waiting for us with *those . . .*" He nodded to the tigers and the cyclones and the boiling seas.

"Captain," said Koestler.

"Yes."

"It's a little late to tell you this. But just before we took off, I was in charge of the air lock. I let Driscoll slip away from

the ship. He wanted to go. I couldn't refuse him. I'm responsible. He's back there now, on that planet."

They both turned to the viewing port.

After a long while, Forester said, "I'm glad. I'm glad one of us had enough sense to stay."

"But he's dead by now!"

"No, that display down there is for us, perhaps a visual hallucination. Underneath all the tigers and lions and hurricanes, Driscoll is quite safe and alive, because he's her only audience now. Oh, she'll spoil him rotten. He'll lead a wonderful life, he will, while we're slugging it out up and down the system looking for but never finding a planet quite like this again. No, we won't try to go back and 'rescue' Driscoll. I don't think 'she' would let us anyway. Full speed ahead, Koestler, make it full speed."

The rocket leaped forward into greater accelerations.

And just before the planet dwindled away in brightness and mist, Forester imagined that he could see Driscoll very clearly, walking away down from the green forest, whistling quietly, all of the fresh planet around him, a wine creek flowing for him, baked fish lolling in the hot springs, fruit ripening in the midnight trees, and distant forests and lakes waiting for him to happen by. Driscoll walked away across the endless green lawns near the six white stones, beyond the forest, to the edge of the large bright river . . .

## Isaac Asimov "IN A GOOD CAUSE —"

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*H. G. Wells used science-fiction literary devices—space and time travel in particular—to propound a historian's philosophical views on sociology and government. The solution of human conflicts undoubtedly lies somewhere within the corpus of political science texts, as it does within the Scriptures. Apply the right formula, the proper balance of thought and rule from each, and you have peace. But finding the formula is another matter, and the best-intentioned thinkers often martyr themselves to no avail.*

*In a story with a superb and startling twist, Dr. Asimov here reverses the H. G. Wells pattern. He is a scientist by profession who thinks like a philosopher—and writes like a thinker! In this penetrating study of the philosophy of revolution, Asimov has conceived a wonderfully ironical plot and produced one of the truly fine stories of his career.*

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**I**N THE GREAT COURT, which stands as a patch of untouched peace among the fifty busy square miles devoted to the towering buildings that are the pulse beat of the United Worlds of the Galaxy, stands a statue.

It stands where it can look at the stars at night. There are other statues ringing the court, but this one stands in the center and alone.



It is not a very good statue. The face is too noble and lacks the lines of living. The brow is a shade too high, the nose a shade too straight, the clothing a shade too carefully disposed. The whole bearing is by far too saintly to be true. One can suppose that the man in real life might have frowned at times, or hiccupped, but the statue seemed to insist that such imperfections were impossible.

All this, of course, is understandable overcompensation. The man had no statues raised to him while alive, and succeeding generations, with the advantage of hindsight, felt guilty.

The name on the pedestal reads "Richard Sayama Altmayer." Underneath it is a short phrase and, vertically arranged, three dates. The phrase is: "*In a good cause, there are no failures.*" The three dates are June 17, 2755; September 5, 2788; December 21, 3000;—the years being counted in the usual manner of the period, that is, from the date of the first atomic explosion in 1944 of the ancient era.

None of those dates represents either his birth or death. They mark neither a date of marriage or of the accomplishment of some great deed or, indeed, of anything that the inhabitants of the United Worlds can remember with pleasure and pride. Rather, they are the final expression of the feeling of guilt.

Quite simply and plainly, they are the three dates upon which Richard Sayama Altmayer was sent to prison for his opinions.

### 1—June 17, 2755

At the age of twenty-two, certainly, Dick Altmayer was fully capable of feeling fury. His hair was as yet dark brown and he had not grown the mustache which, in later years, would be so characteristic of him. His nose was, of course, thin and high-bridged, but the contours of his face were youthful. It would only be later that the growing gauntness of his cheeks would convert that nose into the prominent landmark that it now is in the minds of trillions of school children.

Geoffrey Stock was standing in the doorway, viewing the results of his friend's fury. His round face and cold, steady

eyes were there, but he had yet to put on the first of the military uniforms in which he was to spend the rest of his life.

He said, "Great Galaxy!"

Altmayer looked up. "Hello, Jeff."

"What's been happening, Dick? I thought your principles, pal, forbid destruction of any kind. Here's a book-viewer that looks somewhat destroyed." He picked up the pieces.

Altmayer said, "I was holding the viewer when my wave-receiver came through with an official message. You know which one, too."

"I know. It happened to me, too. Where is it?"

"On the floor. I tore it off the spool as soon as it belched out at me. Wait, let's dump it down the atom chute."

"Hey, hold on. You can't—"

"Why not?"

"Because you won't accomplish anything. You'll have to report."

"And just why?"

"Don't be an ass, Dick."

"This is a matter of principle, by Space."

"Oh, nuts! You can't fight the whole planet."

"I don't intend to fight the whole planet; just the few who get us into wars."

Stock shrugged. "That means the whole planet. That guff of yours of leaders tricking poor innocent people into fighting is just so much space-dust. Do you think that if a vote were taken the people wouldn't be overwhelmingly in favor of fighting this fight?"

"That means nothing, Jeff. The government has control of—"

"The organs of propaganda. Yes, I know. I've listened to you often enough. But why not report, anyway?"

Altmayer turned away.

Stock said, "In the first place, you might not pass the physical examination."

"I'd pass. I've been in Space."

"That doesn't mean anything. If the doctors let you hop a liner, that only means you don't have a heart murmur or an aneurysm. For military duty aboard ship in Space you need

much more than just that. How do you know you qualify?"

"That's a side issue, Jeff, and an insulting one. It's not that I'm afraid to fight."

"Do you think you can stop the war this way?"

"I wish I could," Altmayer's voice almost shook as he spoke. "It's this idea I have that all mankind should be a single unit. There shouldn't be wars or space-fleets armed only for destruction. The Galaxy stands ready to be opened to the united efforts of the human race. Instead, we have been factioned for nearly two thousand years, and we throw away all the Galaxy."

Stock laughed, "We're doing all right. There are more than eighty independent planetary systems."

"And are we the only intelligences in the Galaxy?"

"Oh, the Diaboli, your particular devils," and Stock put his fists to his temples and extended the two forefingers, wagging them.

"And yours, too, and everybody's. They have a single government extending over more planets than all those occupied by our precious eighty independents."

"Sure, and their nearest planet is only fifteen hundred light years away, and they can't live on oxygen planets anyway."

Stock got out of his friendly mood. He said, curtly, "Look, I dropped by here to say that I was reporting for examination next week. Are you coming with me?"

"No."

"You're really determined."

"I'm really determined."

"You know you'll accomplish nothing. There'll be no great flame ignited on Earth. It will be no case of millions of young men being excited by your example into a no-war strike. You will simply be put in jail."

"Well, then, jail it is."

And jail it was. On June 17, 2755, of the atomic era, after a short trial in which Richard Sayama Altmayer refused to present any defense, he was sentenced to jail for the term of three years or for the duration of the war, whichever should be longer. He served a little over four years and two months, at which time the war ended in a definite though not shattering

Santannian defeat. Earth gained complete control of certain disputed asteroids, various commercial advantages, and a limitation of the Santannian navy.

The combined human losses of the war were something over two thousand ships with, of course, most of their crews, and in addition, several millions of lives due to the bombardment of planetary surfaces from space. The fleets of the two contending powers had been sufficiently strong to restrict this bombardment to the outposts of their respective systems, so that the planets of Earth and Santanni, themselves, were little affected.

The war conclusively established Earth as the strongest single human military power.

Geoffrey Stock fought throughout the war, seeing action more than once and remaining whole in life and limb despite that. At the end of the war he had the rank of major. He took part in the first diplomatic mission sent out by Earth to the worlds of the Diaboli, and that was the first step in his expanding role in Earth's military and political life.

### *2—September 5, 2788*

They were the first Diaboli ever to have appeared on the surface of Earth itself. The projection posters and the newscasts of the Federalist party made that abundantly clear to any who were unaware of that. Over and over, they repeated the chronology of events.

It was toward the beginning of the century that human explorers first came across the Diaboli. They were intelligent and had discovered interstellar travel independently somewhat earlier than had the humans. Already the galactic volume of their dominions was greater than that which was human-occupied.

Regular diplomatic relationships between the Diaboli and the major human powers had begun twenty years earlier, immediately after the war between Santanni and Earth. At that time, outposts of Diaboli power were already within twenty light years of human centers. Their missions went everywhere,

drawing trade treaties, obtaining concessions on unoccupied asteroids.

And now they were on Earth itself. They were treated as equals and perhaps as more than equals by the rulers of the greatest center of human population in the Galaxy. The most damning statistic of all was the most loudly proclaimed by the Federalists. It was this: Although the number of living Diaboli was somewhat less than the total number of living humans, humanity had opened up not more than five new worlds to colonization in fifty years, while the Diaboli had begun the occupation of nearly five hundred.

"A hundred to one against us," cried the Federalists, "because they are one political organization and we are a hundred." But relatively few on Earth, and fewer in the Galaxy as a whole, paid attention to the Federalists and their demands for Galactic Union.

The crowds that lined the streets along which nearly daily the five Diaboli of the mission traveled from their specially conditioned suite in the best hotel of the city to the Secretariat of Defense were, by and large, not hostile. Most were merely curious, and more than a little revolted.

The Diaboli were not pleasant creatures to look at. They were larger and considerably more massive than Earthmen. They had four stubby legs set close together below and two flexibly-fingered arms above. Their skin was wrinkled and naked and they wore no clothing. Their broad, scaly faces wore no expressions capable of being read by Earthmen, and from flattened regions just above each large-pupilled eye there sprang short horns. It was these last that gave the creatures their names. At first they had been called devils, and later the politer Latin equivalent.

Each wore a pair of cylinders on its back from which flexible tubes extended to the nostrils; there they clamped on tightly. These were packed with soda-lime which absorbed the, to them, poisonous carbon dioxide from the air they breathed. Their own metabolism revolved about the reduction of sulfur and sometimes those foremost among the humans

in the crowd caught a foul whiff of the hydrogen sulfide exhaled by the Diaboli.

The leader of the Federalists was in the crowd. He stood far back where he attracted no attention from the police who had roped off the avenues and who now maintained a watchful order on the little hoppers that could be maneuvered quickly through the thickest crowd. The Federalist leader was gaunt-faced, with a thin and prominently bridged nose and straight, graying hair.

He turned away, "I cannot bear to look at them."

His companion was more philosophic. He said, "No uglier in spirit, at least, than some of our handsome officials. These creatures are at least true to their own."

"You are sadly right. Are we entirely ready?"

"Entirely. There won't be one of them alive to return to his world."

"Good! I will remain here to give the signal."

The Diaboli were talking as well. This fact could not be evident to any human, no matter how close. To be sure, they could communicate by making ordinary sounds to one another but that was not their method of choice. The skin between their horns could, by the actions of muscles which differed in their construction from any known to humans, vibrate rapidly. The tiny waves which were transmitted in this manner to the air were too rapid to be heard by the human ear and too delicate to be detected by any but the most sensitive of human instrumentation. At that time, in fact, humans remained unaware of this form of communication.

A vibration said, "Did you know that this is the planet of origin of the Two-legs?"

"No." There was a chorus of such no's, and then one particular vibration said, "Do you get that from the Two-leg communications you have been studying, queer one?"

"Because I study the communications? More of our people should do so instead of insisting so firmly on the complete worthlessness of Two-leg culture. For one thing, we are in a much better position to deal with the Two-legs if we know

something about them. Their history is interesting in a horrible way. I am glad I brought myself to view their spools."

"And yet," came another vibration, "from our previous contacts with Two-legs, one would be certain that they did not know their planet of origin. Certainly there is no veneration of this planet, Earth, or any memorial rites connected with it. Are you sure the information is correct?"

"Entirely so. The lack of ritual, and the fact that this planet is by no means a shrine, is perfectly understandable in the light of Two-leg history. The Two-legs on the other worlds would scarcely concede the honor. It would somehow lower the independent dignity of their own worlds."

"I don't quite understand."

"Neither do I, exactly, but after several days of reading I think I catch a glimmer. It would seem that, originally, when interstellar travel was first discovered by the Two-legs, they lived under a single political unit."

"Naturally."

"Not for these Two-legs. This was an unusual stage in their history and did not last. After the colonies on the various worlds grew and came to reasonable maturity, their first interest was to break away from the mother world. The first in the series of interstellar wars among these Two-legs began then."

"Horrible. Like cannibals."

"Yes, isn't it? My digestion has been upset for days. My cud is sour. In any case, the various colonies gained independence, so that now we have the situation of which we are well aware. All of the Two-leg kingdoms, republics, aristocracies, etc., are simply tiny clots of worlds, each consisting of a dominant world and a few subsidiaries which, in turn, are forever seeking their independence or being shifted from one dominant to another. This Earth is the strongest among them and yet less than a dozen worlds owe it allegiance."

"Incredible that these creatures should be so blind to their own interests. Do they not have a tradition of the single government that existed when they consisted of but one world?"

"As I said that was unusual for them. The single government

had existed only a few decades. Prior to that, this very planet itself was split into a number of subplanetary political units."

"Never heard anything like it." For a while, the supersonics of the various creatures interfered with one another.

"It's a fact. It is simply the nature of the beast."

And with that, they were at the Secretariat of Defense.

The five Diaboli stood side by side along the table. They stood because their anatomy did not admit of anything that would correspond to "sitting." On the other side of the table, five Earthmen stood as well. It would have been more convenient for the humans to sit but, understandably, there was no desire to make the handicap of smaller size any more pronounced than it already was. The table was a rather wide one; the widest, in fact, that could be conveniently obtained. This was out of respect for the human nose, for from the Diaboli, slightly so as they breathed, much more so when they spoke, there came the gentle and continuous drift of hydrogen sulfide. This was a difficulty rather unprecedented in diplomatic negotiations.

Ordinarily the meetings did not last for more than half an hour, and at the end of this interval the Diaboli ended their conversations without ceremony and turned to leave. This time, however, the leave-taking was interrupted. A man entered, and the five human negotiators made way for him. He was tall, taller than any of the other Earthmen, and he wore a uniform with the ease of long usage. His face was round and his eyes cold and steady. His black hair was rather thin but as yet untouched by gray. There was an irregular blotch of scar tissue running from the point of his jaw downward past the line of his high, leather-brown collar. It might have been the result of a hand energy-ray, wielded by some forgotten human enemy in one of the five wars in which the man had been an active participant.

"Sirs," said the Earthman who had been chief negotiator hitherto, "may I introduce the Secretary of Defense?"

The Diaboli were somewhat shocked and, although their expressions were in repose and inscrutable, the sound plates on their foreheads vibrated actively. Their strict sense of hier-



archy was disturbed. The Secretary was only a Two-leg, but by Two-leg standards, he outranked them. They could not properly conduct official business with him.

The Secretary was aware of their feelings but had no choice in the matter. For at least ten minutes, their leaving must be delayed and no ordinary interruption could serve to hold back the Diaboli.

"Sirs," he said, "I must ask your indulgence to remain longer this time."

The central Diabolus replied in the nearest approach to English any Diabolus could manage. Actually, a Diabolus might be said to have two mouths. One was hinged at the outermost extremity of the jawbone and was used in eating. In this capacity, the motion of the mouth was rarely seen by human beings, since the Diaboli much preferred to eat in the company of their own kind, exclusively. A narrower mouth opening, however, perhaps two inches in width, could be used in speaking. It pursed itself open, revealing the gummy gap where a Diabolus' missing incisors ought to have been. It remained open during speech, the necessary consonantal blockings being performed by the palate and back of the tongue. The result was hoarse and fuzzy, but understandable.

The Diabolus said, "You will pardon us, already we suffer." And by his forehead, he twittered unheard, "They mean to suffocate us in their vile atmosphere. We must ask for larger poison-absorbing cylinders."

The Secretary of Defense said, "I am in sympathy with your feelings, and yet this may be my only opportunity to speak with you. Perhaps you would do us the honor to eat with us."

The Earthman next the Secretary could not forbear a quick and passing frown. He scribbled rapidly on a piece of paper and passed it to the Secretary, who glanced momentarily at it.

It read, "No. They eat sulfuretted hay. Stinks unbearably." The Secretary crumpled the note and let it drop.

The Diabolus said, "The honor is ours. Were we physically able to endure your strange atmosphere for so long a time, we would accept most gratefully."

And via forehead, he said with agitation, "They cannot ex-

pect us to eat with them and watch them consume the corpses of dead animals. My cud would never be sweet again."

"We respect your reasons," said the Secretary. "Let us then transact our business now. In the negotiations that have so far proceeded, we have been unable to obtain from your government, in the persons of you, their representatives, any clear indication as to what the boundaries of your sphere of influence are in your own minds. We have presented several proposals in this matter."

"As far as the territories of Earth are concerned, Mr. Secretary, a definition has been given."

"But surely you must see that this is unsatisfactory. The boundaries of Earth and your lands are nowhere in contact. So far, you have done nothing but state this fact. While true, the mere statement is not satisfying."

"We do not completely understand. Would you have us discuss the boundaries between ourselves and such independent human kingdoms as that of Vega?"

"Why, yes."

"That cannot be done, sir. Surely, you realize that any relations between ourselves and the sovereign realm of Vega cannot be possibly any concern of Earth. They can be discussed only with Vega."

"Then you will negotiate a hundred times with the hundred human world systems?"

"It is necessary. I would point out, however, that the necessity is imposed not by us but by the nature of your human organization."

"Then that limits our field of discussion drastically." The Secretary seemed abstracted. He was listening, not exactly to the Diaboli opposite, but, rather, it would seem, to something at a distance.

And now there was a faint commotion, barely heard from outside the Secretariat. The babble of distant voices, the brisk crackle of energy-guns muted by distance to nearly nothingness, and the hurried click-clacking of police hoppers.

The Diaboli showed no indication of hearing, nor was this simply another affectation of politeness. If their capacity for

receiving supersonic sound waves was far more delicate and acute than almost anything human ingenuity had ever invented, their reception for ordinary sound waves was rather dull.

The Diabolus was saying, "We beg leave to state our surprise. We were of the opinion that all this was known to you."

A man in police uniform appeared in the doorway. The Secretary turned to him and, with the briefest of nods, the policeman departed.

The Secretary said suddenly and briskly, "Quite. I merely wished to ascertain once again that this was the case. I trust you will be ready to resume negotiations tomorrow?"

"Certainly, sir."

One by one, slowly, with a dignity befitting the heirs of the universe, the Diaboli left.

An Earthman said, "I'm glad they refused to eat with us."

"I knew they couldn't accept," said the Secretary, thoughtfully. "They're vegetarian. They sicken thoroughly at the very thought of eating meat. I've seen them eat, you know. Not many humans have. They resemble our cattle in the business of eating. They bolt their food and then stand solemnly about in circles, chewing their cuds in a great community of thought. Perhaps they intercommunicate by a method we are unaware of. The huge lower jaw rotates horizontally in a slow, grinding process—"

The policeman had once more appeared in the doorway.

The Secretary broke off, and called, "You have them all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you have Altmayer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good."

The crowd had gathered again when the five Diaboli emerged from the Secretariat. The schedule was strict. At 3:00 P.M. each day they left their suite and spent five minutes walking to the Secretariat. At 3:35, they emerged therefrom once again and returned to their suite, the way being kept

clear by the police. They marched stolidly, almost mechanically, along the broad avenue.

Halfway in their trek there came the sounds of shouting men. To most of the crowd, the words were not clear but there was the crackle of an energy-gun and the pale blue fluorescence split the air overhead. Police wheeled, their own energy-guns drawn, hoppers springing seven feet into the air, landing delicately in the midst of groups of people, touching none of them, jumping again almost instantly. People scattered and their voices were joined to the general uproar.

Through it all, the Diaboli, either through defective hearing or excessive dignity, continued marching as mechanically as ever.

At the other end of the gathering, almost diametrically opposing the region of excitement, Richard Sayama Altmayer stroked his nose in a moment of satisfaction. The strict chronology of the Diaboli had made a split-second plan possible. The first diversionary disturbance was only to attract the attention of the police. It was now—

And he fired a harmless sound pellet into the air.

Instantly, from four directions, concussion pellets split the air. From the roofs of buildings lining the way, snipers fired.

Each of the Diaboli, torn by the shells, shuddered and exploded as the pellets detonated within them. One by one, they toppled.

And from nowhere, the police were at Altmayer's side. He stared at them with some surprise.

Gently, for in twenty years he had lost his fury and learned to be gentle, he said, "You come quickly, but even so you come too late." He gestured in the direction of the shattered Diaboli.

The crowd was in simple panic now. Additional squadrons of police, arriving in record time, could do nothing more than herd them off into harmless directions.

The policeman, who now held Altmayer in a firm grip, taking the sound gun from him and inspecting him quickly for further weapons, was a captain by rank. He said, stiffly, "I think you've made a mistake, Mr. Altmayer. You'll notice

you’ve drawn no blood.” And he, too, waved toward where the Diaboli lay motionless.

Altmayer turned, startled. The creatures lay there on their sides, some in pieces, tattered skin shredding away, frames distorted and bent, but the police captain was correct. There was no blood, no flesh. Altmayer’s lips, pale and stiff, moved soundlessly.

The police captain interpreted the motion accurately enough. He said, “You are correct, sir, they are robots.”

And from the great doors of the Secretariat of Defense, the true Diaboli emerged. Clubbing policemen cleared the way, but another way, so that they need not pass the sprawled travesties of plastic and aluminum which for three minutes had played the role of living creatures.

The police captain said, “I’ll ask you to come without trouble, Mr. Altmayer. The Secretary of Defense would like to see you.”

“I am coming, sir.” A stunned frustration was only now beginning to overwhelm him.

Geoffrey Stock and Richard Altmayer faced one another for the first time in almost a quarter of a century, there in the Defense Secretary’s private office. It was a rather strait-laced office: a desk, an armchair, and two additional chairs. All were a dull brown in color, the chairs being topped by blown foam-ite which yielded to the body enough for comfort, not enough for luxury. There was a micro-viewer on the desk and a little cabinet big enough to hold several dozen opto-spools. On the wall opposite the desk was a trimensional view of the old *Dauntless*, the Secretary’s first command.

Stock said, “It is a little ridiculous meeting like this after so many years. I find I am sorry.”

“Sorry about what, Jeff?” Altmayer tried to force a smile, “I am sorry about nothing but that you tricked me with those robots.”

“You were not difficult to trick,” said Stock, “and it was an excellent opportunity to break your party. I’m sure it will be

quite discredited after this. The pacifist tries to force war; the apostle of gentleness tries assassination."

"War against the true enemy," said Altmayer sadly. "But you are right. It is a sign of desperation that this was forced on me."—Then, "How did you know my plans?"

"You still overestimate humanity, Dick. In any conspiracy the weakest points are the people that compose it. You had twenty-five co-conspirators. Didn't it occur to you that at least one of them might be an informer, or even an employee of mine?"

A dull red burned slowly on Altmayer's high cheekbones. "Which one?" he said.

"Sorry. We may have to use him again."

Altmayer sat back in his chair wearily. "What have you gained?"

"What have *you* gained? You are as impractical now as on that last day I saw you; the day you decided to go to jail rather than report for induction. You haven't changed."

Altmayer shook his head, "The truth doesn't change."

Stock said impatiently, "If it is truth, why does it always fail? Your stay in jail accomplished nothing. The war went on. Not one life was saved. Since then, you've started a political party; and every cause it has backed has failed. Your conspiracy has failed. You're nearly fifty, Dick, and what have you accomplished? Nothing."

Altmayer said, "And you went to war, rose to command a ship, then to a place in the Cabinet. They say you will be the next Coordinator. You've accomplished a great deal. Yet success and failure do not exist in themselves. Success in what? Success in working the ruin of humanity. Failure in what? In saving it? I wouldn't change places with you. Jeff, remember this. In a good cause, there are no failures; there are only delayed successes."

"Even if you are executed for this day's work?"

"Even if I am executed. There will be someone else to carry on, and his success will be my success."

"How do you envisage this success? Can you really see a union of worlds, a Galactic Federation? Do you want San-

tanni running our affairs? Do you want a Vegan telling you what to do? Do you want Earth to decide its own destiny or to be at the mercy of any random combination of powers?”

“We would be at their mercy no more than they would be at ours.”

“Except that we are the richest. We would be plundered for the sake of the depressed worlds of the Sirius Sector.”

“And pay the plunder out of what we would save in the wars that would no longer occur.”

“Do you have answers for all questions, Dick?”

“In twenty years we have been asked all questions, Jeff.”

“Then answer this one. How would you force this union of yours on unwilling humanity?”

“That is why I wanted to kill the Diaboli.” For the first time, Altmayer showed agitation. “It would mean war with them, but all humanity would unite against the common enemy. Our own political and ideological differences would fade in the face of that.”

“You really believe that? Even when the Diaboli have never harmed us? They cannot live on our worlds. They must remain on their own worlds of sulfide atmosphere and oceans which are sodium sulfate solutions.”

“Humanity knows better, Jeff. They are spreading from world to world like an atomic explosion. They block space-travel into regions where there are unoccupied oxygen worlds, the kind *we* could use. They are planning for the future: making room for uncounted future generations of Diaboli, while we are being restricted to one corner of the Galaxy, and fighting ourselves to death. In a thousand years we will be their slaves; in ten thousand we will be extinct. Oh, yes, they are the common enemy. Mankind knows that. You will find that out sooner than you think, perhaps.”

The Secretary said, “Your party members speak a great deal of ancient Greece of the preatomic age. They tell us that the Greeks were a marvelous people, the most culturally advanced of their time, perhaps of all times. They set mankind on the road it has never yet left entirely. They had only one flaw.

They could not unite. They were conquered and eventually died out. And we follow in their footsteps now, eh?"

"You have learned your lesson well, Jeff."

"But have you, Dick?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did the Greeks have no common enemy against whom they could unite?"

Altmayer was silent.

Stock said, "The Greeks fought Persia, their great common enemy. Was it not a fact that a good proportion of the Greek states fought on the Persian side?"

Altmayer said finally, "Yes. Because they thought Persian victory was inevitable and they wanted to be on the winning side."

"Human beings haven't changed, Dick. Why do you suppose the Diaboli are here? What is it we are discussing?"

"I am not a member of the government."

"No," said Stock, savagely, "but I am. The Vegan League has allied itself with the Diaboli."

"I don't believe you. It can't be."

"It can be and is. The Diaboli have agreed to supply them with five hundred ships at any time they happen to be at war with Earth. In return, Vega abandons all claims to the Nigellian star cluster. So if you had really assassinated the Diaboli, it would have been war, but with half of humanity probably fighting on the side of your so-called common enemy. We are trying to prevent that."

Altmayer said slowly, "I am ready for trial. Or am I to be executed without one?"

Stock said, "You are still foolish. If we shoot you, Dick, we make a martyr. If we keep you alive and shoot only your subordinates, you will be suspected of having turned state's evidence. As a presumed traitor, you will be quite harmless in the future."

And so, on September 5th, 2788, Richard Sayama Altmayer after the briefest of secret trials was sentenced to five years in prison. He served his full term. The year he emerged from prison, Geoffrey Stock was elected Coordinator of Earth.



3—December 21, 3000

Simon Devoire was not at ease. He was a little man, with sandy hair and a freckled, ruddy face. He said, "I'm sorry I agreed to see you, Altmayer. It won't do you any good. It might do me harm."

Altmayer said, "I am an old man. I won't hurt you." And he was indeed a very old man somehow. The turn of the millennium found his years at two thirds of a century, but he was older than that, older inside and older outside. His clothes were too big for him, as if he were shrinking away inside them. Only his nose had not aged; it was still the thin, aristocratic, high-beaked Altmayer nose.

Devoire said, "It's not you I'm afraid of."

"Why not? Perhaps you think I betrayed the men of '88."

"No, of course not. No man of sense believes that you did. But the days of the Federalists are over, Altmayer."

Altmayer tried to smile. He felt a little hungry; he hadn't eaten that day—no time for food. Was the day of the Federalists over? It might seem so to others. The movement had died on a wave of ridicule. A conspiracy that fails, a "lost cause," is often romantic. It is remembered and draws adherents for generations, *if* the loss is at least a dignified one. But to shoot at living creatures and find the mark to be robots; to be outmaneuvered and outfoxed; to be made ridiculous—that is deadly. It is deadlier than treason, wrong, and sin. Not many had believed Altmayer had bargained for his life by betraying his associates, but the universal laughter killed Federalism as effectively as though they had.

But Altmayer had remained stolidly stubborn under it all. He said, "The day of the Federalists will never be over, while the human race lives."

"Words," said Devoire impatiently. "They meant more to me when I was younger. I am a little tired now."

"Simon, I need access to the subetheric system."

Devoire's face hardened. He said, "And you thought of me. I'm sorry, Altmayer, but I can't let you use my broadcasts for your own purposes."

"You were a Federalist once."

"Don't rely on that," said Devoire. "That's in the past. Now I am—nothing. I am a Devoirist, I suppose. I want to live."

"Even if it is under the feet of the Diaboli? Do you want to live when they are willing; die when they are ready?"

"Words!"

"Do you approve of the all-Galactic conference?"

Devoire reddened past his usual pink level. He gave the sudden impression of a man with too much blood for his body. He said smolderingly, "Well, why not? What does it matter how we go about establishing the Federation of Man? If you're still a Federalist, what have you to object to in a united humanity?"

"United under the Diaboli?"

"What's the difference? Humanity can't unite by itself. Let us be driven to it, as long as the fact is accomplished. I am sick of it all, Altmayer, sick of all our stupid history. I'm tired of trying to be an idealist with nothing to be idealistic over. Human beings are human beings and that's the nasty part of it. Maybe we've got to be whipped into line. If so, I'm perfectly willing to let the Diaboli do the whipping."

Altmayer said gently, "You're very foolish, Devoire. It won't be a real union, you know that. The Diaboli called this conference so that they might act as umpires on all current interhuman disputes to their own advantage, and remain the supreme court of judgment over us hereafter. You know they have no intention of establishing a real central human government. It will only be a sort of interlocking directorate; each human government will conduct its own affairs as before and pull in various directions as before. It is simply that we will grow accustomed to running to the Diaboli with our little problems."

"How do you know that will be the result?"

"Do you seriously think any other result is possible?"

Devoire chewed at his lower lip, "Maybe not!"

"Then see through a pane of glass, Simon. Any true independence we now have will be lost."

"A lot of good this independence has ever done us.—Besides, what's the use? We can't stop this thing. Coordinator Stock is probably no keener on the conference than you are, but that

doesn't help him. If Earth doesn't attend, the union will be formed without us, and then we will face war with the rest of humanity and the Diaboli. And that goes for any other government that wants to back out."

"What if *all* the governments back out? Wouldn't the conference break up completely?"

"Have you ever known all the human governments to do *anything* together? You never learn, Altmayer."

"There are new facts involved."

"Such as? I know I am foolish for asking, but go ahead."

Altmayer said, "For twenty years most of the Galaxy has been shut to human ships. You know that. None of us has the slightest notion of what goes on within the Diaboli sphere of influence. And yet some human colonies exist within that sphere."

"So?"

"So occasionally, human beings escape into the small portion of the Galaxy that remains human and free. The government of Earth receives reports; reports which they don't dare make public. But not *all* officials of the government can stand the cowardice involved in such actions forever. One of them has been to see me. I can't tell you which one, of course— So I have documents, Devoire; official, reliable, and true."

Devoire shrugged, "About what?" He turned the desk chronometer rather ostentatiously so that Altmayer could see its gleaming metal face on which the red, glowing figures stood out sharply. They read 22:31, and even as it was turned, the 1 faded and the new glow of a 2 appeared.

Altmayer said, "There is a planet called by its colonists Chu Hsi. It did not have a large population; two million, perhaps. Fifteen years ago the Diaboli occupied worlds on various sides of it; and in all those fifteen years, no human ship ever landed on the planet. Last year the Diaboli themselves landed. They brought with them huge freight ships filled with sodium sulfate and bacterial cultures that are native to their own worlds."

"What?—You can't make me believe it."

"Try," said Altmayer, ironically. "It is not difficult. Sodium sulfate will dissolve in the oceans of any world. In a sulfate

ocean, their bacteria will grow, multiply, and produce hydrogen sulfide in tremendous quantities which will fill the oceans and the atmosphere. They can then introduce their plants and animals and eventually themselves. Another planet will be suitable for Diaboli life—and unsuitable for any human. It would take time, surely, but the Diaboli have time. They are a united people and . . .”

“Now, look,” Devoire waved his hand in disgust, “that just doesn’t hold water. The Diaboli have more worlds than they know what to do with.”

“For their present purposes, yes, but the Diaboli are creatures that look toward the future. Their birth rate is high and eventually they will fill the Galaxy. And how much better off they would be if they were the only intelligence in the universe.”

“But it’s impossible on purely physical grounds. Do you know how many millions of tons of sodium sulfate it would take to fill up the oceans to their requirements?”

“Obviously a planetary supply.”

“Well, then, do you suppose they would strip one of their own worlds to create a new one? Where is the gain?”

“Simon, Simon, there are millions of planets in the Galaxy which through atmospheric conditions, temperature, or gravity are forever uninhabitable either to humans or to Diaboli. Many of these are quite adequately rich in sulfur.”

Devoire considered, “What about the human beings on the planet?”

“On Chu Hsi? Euthanasia—except for the few who escaped in time. Painless I suppose. The Diaboli are not needlessly cruel, merely efficient.”

Altmayer waited. Devoire’s fist clenched and unclenched.

Altmayer said, “Publish this news. Spread it out on the interstellar subetheric web. Broadcast the documents to the reception centers on the various worlds. You can do it, and when you do, the all-Galactic conference will fall apart.”

Devoire’s chair tilted forward. He stood up. “Where’s your proof?”

“Will you do it?”

“I want to see your proof.”

Altmayer smiled, “Come with me.”

They were waiting for him when he came back to the furnished room he was living in. He didn't notice them at first. He was completely unaware of the small vehicle that followed him at a slow pace and a prudent distance. He walked with his head bent, calculating the length of time it would take for Devoire to put the information through the reaches of Space; how long it would take for the receiving stations on Vega and Santanni and Centaurus to blast out the news; how long it would take to turn over the entire Galaxy. And in this way he passed, unheeding, between the two plain-clothes men who flanked the entrance of the rooming house.

It was only when he opened the door to his own room that he stopped and turned to leave but the plain-clothes men were behind him now. He made no attempt at violent escape. He entered the room instead and sat down, feeling so old. He thought feverishly, I need only hold them off an hour and ten minutes.

The man who occupied the darkness reached up and flicked the switch that allowed the wall lights to operate. In the soft wall glow, the man's round face and balding gray-fringed head were startlingly clear.

Altmayer said gently, “I am honored with a visit by the Coordinator himself.”

And Stock said, “We are old friends, you and I, Dick. We meet every once in a while.”

Altmayer did not answer.

Stock said, “You have certain government papers in your possession, Dick.”

Altmayer said, “If you think so, Jeff, you'll have to find them.”

Stock rose wearily to his feet. “No heroics, Dick. Let me tell you what those papers contained. They were circumstantial reports of the sulfation of the planet, Chu Hsi. Isn't that true?”

Altmayer looked at the clock.

Stock said, “If you are planning to delay us, to angle us as

though we were fish, you will be disappointed. We know where you've been, we know Devoire has the papers, we know exactly what he's planning to do with them."

Altmayer stiffened. The thin parchment of his cheeks trembled. He said, "How long have you known?"

"As long as you have, Dick. You are a very predictable man. It is the very reason we decided to use you. Do you suppose the Recorder would really come to see you as he did without our knowledge?"

"I don't understand."

Stock said, "The Government of Earth, Dick, is not anxious that the all-Galactic conference be continued. However, we are not Federalists; we know humanity for what it is. What do you suppose would happen if the rest of the Galaxy discovered that the Diaboli were in the process of changing a salt-oxygen world into a sulfate-sulfide one?"

"No, don't answer. You are Dick Altmayer and I'm sure you'd tell me that with one fiery burst of indignation, they'd abandon the conference, join together in a loving and brotherly union, throw themselves at the Diaboli, and overwhelm them."

Stock paused such a long time that for a moment it might have seemed he would say no more. Then he continued in half a whisper, "Nonsense. They would say that the Government of Earth for purposes of its own had initiated a fraud, had forged documents in a deliberate attempt to disrupt the conference. The Diaboli would deny everything, and most of the human worlds would find it to their interests to believe the denial. They would concentrate on the iniquities of Earth and forget about the iniquities of the Diaboli. So you see, we could sponsor no such exposé."

Altmayer felt drained, futile. "Then you will stop Devoire. It is always that you are so sure of failure beforehand; that you believe the worst of your fellow man—"

"Wait! I said nothing of stopping Devoire. I said only that the government could not sponsor such an exposé and we will not. But the exposé will take place just the same, except that afterward we will arrest Devoire and yourself and denounce the whole thing as vehemently as will the Diaboli. The whole

affair would then be changed. The Government of Earth will have dissociated itself from the claims. It will then seem to the rest of the human government that for our own selfish purposes we are trying to hide the actions of the Diaboli, that we have, perhaps, a special understanding with them. They will fear that special understanding and unite against us. But *then* to be against us will mean that they are also against the Diaboli. They will insist on believing the exposé to be the truth, the documents to be real—and the conference will break up.”

“It will mean war again,” said Altmayer hopelessly, “and not against the real enemy. It will mean fighting among the humans and a victory all the greater for the Diaboli when it is all over.”

“No war,” said Stock. “No government will attack Earth with the Diaboli on our side. The other governments will merely draw away from us and grind a permanent anti-Diaboli bias into their propaganda. Later, if there should be war between ourselves and the Diaboli, the other governments will at least remain neutral.”

He looks very old, thought Altmayer. We are all old, dying men. Aloud, he said, “Why would you expect the Diaboli to back Earth? You may fool the rest of mankind by pretending to attempt suppression of the facts concerning the planet Chu Hsi, but you won’t fool the Diaboli. They won’t for a moment believe Earth to be sincere in its claim that it believes the documents to be forgeries.”

“Ah, but they will.” Geoffrey Stock stood up, “You see, the documents *are* forgeries. The Diaboli may be planning sulfation of planets in the future, but to our knowledge, they have not tried it yet.”

On December 21, 3000, Richard Sayama Altmayer entered prison for the third and last time. There was no trial, no definite sentence, and scarcely a real imprisonment in the literal sense of the word. His movements were confined and only a few officials were allowed to communicate with him, but otherwise his comforts were looked to assiduously. He had no ac-

cess to news, of course, so that he was not aware that in the second year of this third imprisonment of his, the war between Earth and the Diaboli opened with the surprise attack near Sirius by an Earth squadron upon certain ships of the Diaboli navy.

In 3002, Geoffrey Stock came to visit Altmayer in his confinement. Altmayer rose in surprise to greet him.

"You're looking well, Dick," Stock said.

He himself was not. His complexion had grayed. He still wore his naval captain's uniform, but his body stooped slightly within it. He was to die within the year, a fact of which he was not completely unaware. It did not bother him much. He thought repeatedly, I have lived the years I've had to live.

Altmayer, who looked the older of the two, had yet more than nine years to live. He said, "An unexpected pleasure, Jeff, but this time you can't have come to imprison me. I'm in prison already."

"I've come to set you free, if you would like."

"For what purpose, Jeff? Surely you have a purpose? A clever way of using me?"

Stock's smile was merely a momentary twitch. He said, "A way of using you, truly, but this time you will approve. . . . We are at war."

"With whom?" Altmayer was startled.

"With the Diaboli. We have been at war for six months."

Altmayer brought his hands together, thin fingers interlacing nervously, "I've heard nothing of this."

"I know." The Coordinator clasped his hands behind his back and was distantly surprised to find that they were trembling. He said, "It's been a long journey for the two of us, Dick. We've had the same goal, you and I— No, let me speak. I've often wanted to explain my point of view to you, but you would never have understood. You weren't the kind of man to understand, until I had the results for you.—I was twenty-five when I first visited a Diaboli world, Dick. I knew then it was either they or we."

"I said so," whispered Altmayer, "from the first."



“Merely saying so was not enough. You wanted to force the human governments to unite against them and that notion was politically unrealistic and completely impossible. It wasn’t even desirable. Humans are not Diaboli. Among the Diaboli, individual consciousness is low, almost nonexistent. Ours is almost overpowering. They have no such thing as politics; we have nothing else. They can never disagree, can have nothing but a single government. We can never agree; if we had a single island to live on, we would split it in three.

*“But our very disagreements are our strength!”* Your Federalist party used to speak of ancient Greece a great deal once. Do you remember? But your people always missed the point. To be sure, Greece could never unite and was therefore ultimately conquered. But even in her state of disunion, she defeated the gigantic Persian Empire. Why?

“I would like to point out that the Greek city-states over centuries had fought with one another. They were forced to specialize in things military to an extent far beyond the Persians. Even the Persians themselves realized that, and in the last century of their imperial existence, Greek mercenaries formed the most valued parts of their armies.

“The same might be said of the small nation-states of pre-atomic Europe, which in centuries of fighting had advanced their military arts to the point where they could overcome and hold for two hundred years the comparatively gigantic empires of Asia.

“So it is with us. The Diaboli, with vast extents of galactic space, have never fought a war. Their military machine is massive, but untried. In fifty years, only such advances have been made by them as they have been able to copy from the various human navies. Humanity, on the other hand, has competed ferociously in warfare. Each government has raced to keep ahead of its neighbors in military science. They’ve had to! It was our own disunion that made the terrible race for survival necessary, so that in the end almost any one of us was a match for all the Diaboli, provided only that none of us would fight on their side in a general war.

“It was toward the prevention of such a development that

all of Earth's diplomacy has been aimed. Until it was certain that in a war between Earth and the Diaboli, the rest of humanity would be at least neutral, there could be no war, and no union of human governments could be allowed, since the race for military perfection must continue. Once we were sure of neutrality, through the hoax that broke up the conference two years ago, we sought the war, and now we have it."

Alt Mayer, through all this, might have been frozen. It was a long time before he could say anything.

Finally, "What if the Diaboli are victorious after all?"

Stock said, "They aren't. Two weeks ago, the main fleets joined action and theirs was annihilated with practically no loss to ourselves, although we were greatly outnumbered. We might have been fighting unarmed ships. We had stronger weapons of greater range and more accurate sighting. We had three times their effective speed since we had antiacceleration devices which they lacked. Since the battle a dozen of the other human governments have decided to join the winning side and have declared war on the Diaboli. Yesterday the Diaboli requested that negotiations for an armistice be opened. The war is practically over; and henceforward the Diaboli will be confined to their original planets with only such future expansions as we permit."

Alt Mayer murmured incoherently.

Stock said, "And now union becomes necessary. After the defeat of Persia by the Greek city-states, they were ruined because of their continued wars among themselves, so that first Macedon and then Rome conquered them. After Europe colonized the Americas, cut up Africa, and conquered Asia, a series of continued European wars led to European partition and ruin.

"Disunion until conquest; union thereafter! But now union is easy. Let one subdivision succeed by itself and the rest will clamor to become part of that success. The ancient writer, Toynbee, first pointed out this difference between what he called a 'dominant minority' and a 'creative minority.'

"We are a creative minority now. In an almost spontaneous gesture, various human governments have suggested the for-

mation of a United Worlds organization. Over seventy governments are willing to attend the first sessions in order to draw up a Charter of Federation. The others will join later, I am sure. We would like you to be one of the delegates from Earth, Dick.”

Altmayer found his eyes flooding, “I—I don’t understand your purpose. Is this all true?”

“It is all exactly as I say. You were a voice in the wilderness, Dick, crying for union. Your words will carry much weight. What did you once say: ‘In a good cause, there are no failures.’”

“No!” said Altmayer, with sudden energy. “It seems your cause was the good one.”

Stock’s face was hard and devoid of emotion, “You were always a misunderstander of human nature, Dick. When the United Worlds is a reality and when generations of men and women look back to these days of war through their centuries of unbroken peace, they will have forgotten the purpose of my methods. To them they will represent war and death. *Your* calls for union, *your* idealism, will be remembered forever.”

He turned away and Altmayer barely caught his last words: “And when they build their statues, they will build none for me.”

*In the Great Court, which stands as a patch of untouched peace among the fifty busy square miles devoted to the towering buildings that are the pulse beat of the United Worlds of the Galaxy, stands a statue . . .*

Frank Fenton and

## TOLLIVER'S TRAVELS

Joseph Petracca

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*We complain frequently of our present lot and few of us are sanguine about the immediate future, but it is a human habit—and perhaps a failing—to predict utopias for the generations to follow us.*

*In this fanciful and sardonic tale of a future where happiness is enforced by law, two prominent Hollywood screen writers portray the film capital as they envision it for the year 2151.*

*Sam Tolliver, an obscure film hack, was worried about war and middle age and taxes and he thought that real happiness had forever escaped him. But a sad little man with a strange and unbelievable past taught him that a lot of the things we fret about are normal and that we'd be better off to accept them. The sad little man was sure of this because he had a strange and unbelievable future, too.*

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**I**N THE YEAR 1951 Sam Tolliver was rather obscurely engaged in writing stories and screen plays for the motion pictures. Much calumny has been broadcast about the men who ply this innocuous trade, and strange legends have been bruited about them from one end of the land to the other, from Toots Shor's to Romanoff's. Who has not heard of their fabulous salaries, their swimming pools, their Jaguars, their adulteries with notorious actresses, their callous cynicism and, in later times, the treasonable tendencies of their politics? All this, assuredly, is

as absurd as it is false, and nowhere could a likelier refutation of these fallacies be found than in the life and person of Sam Tolliver himself.

For the past ten years Sam Tolliver had been grinding out movie scripts. He was known by all the producers as a good and careful craftsman, if seldom an inspired one. He was a hack, to put it bluntly, but it did not fret him that the avowed practice of Hollywood was to appeal largely to masses of children, adolescents, and assorted cases of arrested development. Nothing delighted him more than to whip up a gun-blazing Western that would pack the Saturday matinees with scatter-brained youth, or to concoct a devious tale of mystery and suspense for the Friday nights of their parents. And whenever some such film he had written was playing in the neighborhood theater, he liked to take his own two children, Linda, ten, and Lonnie, eight, to see the show, and watch their faces while they looked tensely at the screen, delighting in their shrieks of excitement.

There are writers who prefer the thin smile of a sophisticated critic to the belly laughs of a million ill-assorted kids, but Sam Tolliver didn't. He had never deemed himself a man worthy of contriving messages of wisdom to the audiences of the land. He had been satisfied with what he had wrought. He had been pleased with what his work had gained for him: a white stucco bungalow in Cheviot Hills; a 1950 car for himself; a 1946 convertible for his wife, Maryanne; a fine back yard with a flower-fringed lawn and two avocado trees. In the small rumpus room he had built for himself and the children was an excellent twenty-inch television set, on which, infrequently to be sure, there shimmered in gray distortions some film he had long ago written.

Here, indeed, it would seem, was a portrait of a contented man: Yet Sam Tolliver wasn't satisfied.

For Sam Tolliver, addicted to his own happy-ending philosophy, loved orderliness in the world and believed that the state should protect the unfortunate and never permit to any citizen of the nation the ugly indignity of poverty. Because of this, and only this, he had in the last election voted for Harry

Truman, quietly and without arguing the matter with any of the fellows at the Country Club. Yet, since that time, there had come to him, as it had come to many, the sense of something being very wrong and out of kilter in the world.

A period of national chaos had set in, and he watched the strange confusion spread. On the horizon there loomed the dark clouds of another war. It was a gathering storm that all watched, hoping that it might be blown away or be swept out to sea by the Will of God working through the profound mind of some great man. Yet no such man seemed to be among those present. Each day the morning newspaper brought to Tolliver the news of crimes committed, politicians caught red-handed in grafts, youths on orgiastic and murderous sprees, wholesale divorces, and such widespread lawlessness and violence as made his own scenarios seem pallid and naïve.

And worse, the confusion and madness had reached his own home, too. Never before had he fingered so many unpaid bills. Never before had his taxes soared so high as to make impossible a trade-in on a new automobile—and Maryanne was simply hopeless in budgeting the household expenses.

"Look, darling," he told her exasperatedly time after time, "it's only a simple matter of arithmetic to watch your bank balance. You've been overdrawn ten times—"

But it was hopeless.

The years had changed her, too, and the house was not as orderly as she once had kept it. And the children—! Tolliver's temple still bore a blue mark where Lonnie had hit him with the croquet ball; and he limped painfully since the day Linda had crashed into him with her new bicycle.

Confound those kids—!

•

It was in one of these brooding moods that Sam Tolliver drove out to the club one Saturday afternoon for his customary round of golf. He thought of the way the men were now talking at the club, cynically, no longer believing in the truths that had once been foundations of thought. Now it had become

a rat race for money, a dodge to beat the price, to beat the government, to beat one's neighbor. All of it, Sam reflected, was rushing toward another oncoming Dark Age—and he hated it.

When he pulled his car into the club's parking grounds, Benny, the attendant, notified him that his usual group had teed off a half-hour earlier. It was all part of the same pattern—even a golf foursome wasn't sacred any more.

"The sonsabitches!" Sam muttered, getting out of the car. The attendant gaped at him, astonished.

"What was that, Mr. Tolliver?"

"Nothing, Benny. Nothing."

In the locker room he changed into his golf togs, did a shoulder-rotating exercise to get the kinks out of his back, and then swung experimentally at an imaginary golf ball on the wooden floor. He wandered around the locker room looking for a game. Suddenly he heard his name called.

"Hev. Tolliver."

Tolliver turned to see Murray Brown, a small wizened man, known by all the members to be a bookmaker. Normally Brown was an extremely reticent man, who generally played golf alone, never counted the number of shots he made, always removed the ball from hazards or bunkers, and seemed completely indifferent to the theory of the sport.

"Hello, Brown."

"Looking for a game?"

Under ordinary circumstances Tolliver would have quickly manufactured some excuse, dreading the awful prospect of eighteen holes with the little bookmaker, but the locker room was deserted and it didn't look as though any other games would be starting that afternoon. Besides he longed to stretch his legs on the green sunny fairways and pit himself fiercely against the hazards of the course. He accepted Brown's invitation.

"A dollar Nassau?" suggested Brown, lighting up a long cigar.

"All right," Tolliver said.

To Tolliver it proved to be one of the most exasperating experiences of his life. The bookmaker, his cigar stuck in his face, struck the ball with superb unconcern. Never did he manage to hit it more than a hundred yards, seldom did he get it ten feet off the ground. On those occasions when he hit it only ten or twenty yards off the tee, or when he shanked it badly, he calmly dropped another ball and continued the game, playing his best ball.

Angrily, Tolliver drove the ball fiercely from one bunker to the next. His usually skillful game fell to pieces. Time after time he wanted to hurl his club against a tree, or better still at Brown, but he kept a grip on himself. Finally, when the game was over, a nightmare of divots and sand, he hurried to the bar and bought himself a double scotch to relax his tense nerves.

"The drinks are on me," Brown said, lighting up another of his long cigars. He sat next to Tolliver at the bar. "Thanks for the game. I know I'm a very bad player—and I appreciate the game."

Tolliver looked at him curiously. Brown's face was young for its sixty years, but there seemed to be a sad and vast wisdom in it. There was a wistfulness in the dark eyes that suddenly made Tolliver relent and smile at himself for having become so serious about such a commonplace pastime as a game of golf.

"I'm sorry I lost my head out there," he said, turning the glass between his fingers. "It's just that I take the game rather seriously—"

"You don't have to apologize—"

Tolliver drank. "I guess I don't care about anything I can't take seriously. I like to play the game for what it should be, with its rules and everything else."

"Sure," Brown said, smiling. "I guess I gave you a bad time. Let me buy you another drink."

"Thanks," Tolliver said, and added, "I suppose you could call me a stickler for rules. I believe in a story having a beginning and a middle and an end, I believe in teeing off behind the markers, in never racing the yellow light—"



"Sure, sure," Brown laughed. "An idealist."

Tolliver looked at him with some severity. But Brown's face was empty of irony. It was, in fact, brooding and sad. Tolliver said quietly, "I might have been an idealist once, but not any more. Now I'm merely a disgusted man."

The bartender set the two drinks before them. "That's too bad," Brown said.

Tolliver shook his head. "It's all too bad—everything in the world."

The small radio at the bar was recounting the race results at Tanforan, and Tolliver leaned across the bar to shut it off. The bartender came over to Brown, wiping a glass.

"Oh, Mr. Brown," he said, shaking his head. "I almost forgot to tell you. There were two men in here before looking for you—"

Brown stiffened.

"They said they'd see you later."

Brown relaxed. "Thanks—two more drinks."

The bartender moved away and Brown turned his attention to Tolliver. "So you are a disgusted man, Mr. Tolliver. Just from looking at you, I would never have suspected it."

"Do I wear my disgust well?"

Brown laughed; and though Tolliver was feeling somewhat drunk, he realized that he liked this small, dark man. Unlike the other fellows in the club, Brown was essentially a man of intelligence, a misfit in his times, an anachronism. He gazed at the bookmaker warmly.

"Tell me about yourself," he said in his most friendly manner. "You've been a member here for two years and I know nothing about you."

Brown smiled. "In this generation, I'm a bookmaker. However, in other generations I have been more picturesque."

"Other generations?" Tolliver asked, peering at him through half-shut lids.

Brown nodded. "I tell you this because you are a man of some imagination and you have befriended me, in a way."

"Look, Mr. Brown," Tolliver said, rising to his feet unsteadily, "are you drunk, or am I?"

Brown eased him back to the stool, gently. "Tell me, Mr. Tolliver. Did you ever hear of the Judas legend?"

"Of course I have," Tolliver said indignantly. "What hack writer in America hasn't? But what's it got to do with you?"

Brown smiled at him sadly. "Only this, Mr. Tolliver—I was a son of Judas Iscariot, an illegitimate child—"

Tolliver stared.

"—and because of that greatest of all betrayals by my father, I have been doomed to live in every generation of mankind, and in each generation to die violently for a crime against humanity."

The little bookmaker turned away from Tolliver's incredulous stare. He went on with the same sadness. "I died on the rack in the Spanish Inquisition; for the sunken road, I was shot by Wellington at Waterloo; in Salem I was hanged for witchcraft; and after the War between the States I was shot for a Yankee carpetbagger."

Tolliver tried to laugh but couldn't. At last he managed to say, "And when does all your wandering end?"

"When?" repeated Brown, staring at him. "When somebody dies for me."

The bartender brought two more drinks for them. Tolliver smiled at the little bookmaker. "You're marvelous, Brown. Absolutely marvelous. But you are giving my imagination more credit than it deserves."

Brown ignored the remark. His face was now a mask for forgotten wisdoms and ancient sorceries. A shudder went through Tolliver, as though he were in the presence of a man suddenly gone mad. He clutched at the possibility that Brown was drunk, like himself, and teasing him, but the little man's face was such an utter caricature of melancholy that he could not believe this.

"You're drunk, Mr. Brown," he said, wagging a warning finger at him. "You're cockeyed drunk."

Brown ignored this too. He looked at Tolliver and his wry smile returned. "You would not have liked those generations either, Tolliver. Believe me, you would have found them as stupid and disorderly as you find this one. I'll tell you what's

the matter with you, Tolliver. You suffer the bitterest of all human misfortunes—you are a man dreaming ahead of his time.”

“Well,” said Tolliver, beginning to feel better and seeing the possibility of Brown as a character in a movie story, “I am not a son of Judas Iscariot. My father was an insurance salesman in the state of Ohio—but I would like to try another generation—”

“Would you?”

“Yes,” Tolliver said. “In a few hundred years man will finally have learned to behave himself. When each has disciplined himself intelligently, all will live happily together. That’s the answer. What end is there except human happiness?”

Brown shrugged.

“Happiness, that’s what counts,” Tolliver said. The whisky was making his eyes swim, and he noted that Brown was looking at him strangely. He went on.

“Too bad you are such a liar, Brown. You could some day in the brave new future live again in a decent world that might make all your lives in the lousy ones worth the dyings.” He suddenly laughed with the wild freedom of being completely drunk and he put a big arm across Brown’s shoulders, muttering confidentially, “But as a matter of plain fact, Brown, we will both stagger home and pass out and wake up with a hang-over, wishing to God that we were both dead!”

He started to laugh crazily and exultantly, but he checked himself. His brows knit in a humorous frown as he watched Brown extract a small white pill from his pocket and place it in his glass, which was still half-filled with scotch and soda. “What are you putting in my drink, Brown?”

“A pill,” Brown said, smiling at him. “And you will have no hang-over whatever.”

“Ah, the sorcerer’s apprentice!” Tolliver shouted with wild intoxication, but then he suddenly and comically became aware of his own loudness and glanced around, holding a finger to his lips to silence himself. He shushed the bartender

and Brown—and then he downed his drink, pill and all. Brown nodded his head, satisfied.

“Now I will tell you something, Brown. That vitamin B pill you just gave me does nothing, absolutely nothing. The vitamin B is dissolved in the whisky and the whole thing is negated, positively negated. This is just another one of your preposterous illusions—and this poor pill will not prevent the evil to come.”

“Let me correct you,” Brown said softly. “It will.”

Tolliver stared at him again and then burst into uncontrolable laughter. Brown, indeed, was a character—small and guileful, charming and sinister. He started to order one more drink from the bartender, but he didn't make it. The mirror behind the bar swam before him like a mountain stream, swiftly white-foaming, and he could feel himself being sucked into its crashing current, being swept helplessly along in its rushing and leaping fury, then drowning, going down and down, until he became nothing in a deep and tranquil blackness . . .

Sam Tolliver was walking with wonder down the broad streets of the city. He was sure it was Los Angeles because of the palm trees, the wide boulevards, and the familiar disposition of the green hills in the north. The air was pure with spring and he felt within him a marvel of youth, as though he had slept for a long time. He looked about and marveled. The buildings were all new to him, like structures in the dream of a modernistic and utilitarian architect. They seemed composed almost entirely of windows, and the floors were shelf-like, arranged in a strategy to trap the sunlight and the soft breezes from the ocean. He stood at the edge of the boulevard and stared at the passing cars, wheelless and transparent. They were like glass beetles moving evenly and soundlessly, and to his astonishment he noted that they had no steering apparatus. He blinked his eyes and rubbed his face, looking very carefully all about him.

Where was he? Which way was his home?

As he moved on he became aware of the silence of the

city, deep and awesome. In the streets there were no telephone poles, wires, or traffic signals. At regular intervals the traffic stopped at intersections, allowing the cross traffic to proceed, and then it resumed, just as though red and green lights had accomplished it all.

Radar, he thought to himself, and the notion did not terrify him. It was all electronics, not miracles, so why should he be surprised? Even the hobo in the freight car knew that some day all the machines would be operated by atomic power. There was no more point in being amazed by this than by the steam engine or the X-ray machine . . .

He walked on.

Soon he was entering a peopled section of the city and he suddenly stopped in his tracks at the direct sight of them. They were surely normal, but their clothes were fantastic. The men's suits, like the women's dresses, were all of one piece and of a shimmering light cloth, not unlike an additional layer of skin. And the colors of the material seemed to vary slightly in hue, but they were all similar.

Oddly enough, the people seemed to be all alike—perhaps, he told himself, it was because they all seemed to be smiling. They looked wondrously healthy and exuberant and everyone who glanced at him gave him a smile, mixed with a kind of wonder.

Suddenly he felt shriveled and ridiculous. His suit, a brown tweed that was almost new, felt like a piece of weird sackcloth. His thinning hair seemed absurd as he gaped at the flowing thick locks of the magnificent passers-by.

He stood there in the middle of the street, feeling freakish. He had always tried to keep himself fairly fit, but now he felt puny, like a victim of rickets—like a Murray Brown on the line of the Chicago Bears.

Brown!

The white pill in the scotch and soda!

He shook his head to clear it. No, he had not passed out, nor was this a drunken dream. Maybe he had finally gone mad and the thought panicked him. He stared all around him, but there were no bars, no strait jacket, no white-coated in-

terns, no hypodermic needles. It was not madness, but some evil miracle . . .

A miracle? He smiled and felt calmer as his brain began to work. Do not regard anything as miraculous he told himself. You are no boob being transported through time. A miracle is as simple, when comprehended, as say, the telephone or the television. You do not gape and fall to your knees like an Eastern barbarian or an African primitive because of these. Then do not do so now. This was a cool statement to his nerves, a demand for discipline, but he felt that he needed a drink badly.

He walked along until he reached what looked like a bar. It was a simply equipped lounge and inside it people were sitting in oddly shaped chairs made of thin wires that seemed exactly to fit their bodies. As he entered they gazed at him and smiled, with that same mild wonder, but with no apparent ill feeling. He sat down in one of the peculiar chairs and found it pleasantly comfortable. All along one wall was a mural of the sea, but it was not a painting. It was the sea, rolling into the floor of the room with the salt tang of it filling the air. He realized what it was. It was some kind of film, like a process shot, but with a third dimension and color that astounded him. He was staring with admiration and momentary disbelief when a tall youth approached him.

"Yes?" the youth asked.

"A scotch," Tolliver said uncertainly.

"A what?"

"A scotch—a drink—anything, for Heaven's sake!"

Smiling perplexedly, the youth strolled away and vanished behind a glass panel. In a moment he returned, bringing Tolliver a beaker of fluid which was greenish and almost mist-like. He put it to his lips hesitantly and sipped it for taste. It wasn't bad—anise and clover honey. He drank and put the beaker down, feeling better instantly. The trepidation seemed to melt away and he looked serenely at a huge man who now approached.

"My name is Gilder," the tall man said, smiling graciously, "and I must ask you to come with me."

Tolliver felt the calm insistence of Gilder's tone, but such was his sense of well-being that he did not object to the request. He smiled and rose to his feet. All the weariness had gone from his legs he was pleased to observe, and he followed Gilder out to the street.

They walked together down several sterile streets until at last they entered a magnificently domed building. They got into what must have been an elevator, but Tolliver had no sensation of going up or down; and when they got out an instant later he was ushered into a sparsely furnished, glass-filled, carpetless room. Behind a glassy desk sat a white-haired man. He indicated a chair and Tolliver sat down before him.

"I am Professor Aureole," he said smiling. "I am Chief in the Division of Psychiatry—but please do not regard me as an inquisitor."

"Not at all," Tolliver said returning the smile.

"We have been watching you since you came into the city. Our Video picked you up as soon as you came into range—and I must say the entire Council was fascinated. You must admit that your attire and mannerisms are strange—and have caused no end of comment in the city."

"Indeed?" Tolliver said, assuming the watchful-waiting policy that had always served him best in story conferences with the producers.

"Do you have your identifications with you?" Professor Aureole asked.

"Sure," Tolliver said, and he produced several cards from his wallet: driver's license, Social Security card, membership cards in the Screen Writers Guild, the Automobile Club of Southern California, and the Rancho Country Club.

Professor Aureole looked at them one by one. "What curious! 1951? Where did you get these?"

"Where does anybody get them?" Tolliver said. "No American could be found decently dead without them. Do you think they're forgeries?"

"No—no," Professor Aureole assured him hastily. "But I must ask you to explain these and tell us more about yourself."

Tolliver looked from Gilder to Professor Aureole and smiled. This was a scene he had written a hundred times—the police examination scene. He rather enjoyed it, feeling at last like the actor rather than the writer. He spoke freely, telling of his youth in Ohio, the newspapers he had worked on, the magazine stories that had finally landed him in a Hollywood studio. He told of his marriage to Maryanne, the births of Linda and Lonnie, the evilly changing state of the world, and concluded with the episode of his drinking bout with Brown. He was telling jokingly of the white pill dropped in his scotch when suddenly he stopped short and stared around him. For a moment the idea blinded him like a flash of lightning and he felt a hollow sickening in his stomach.

"What is it, Mr. Tolliver?"

Tolliver leaned eagerly across the desk. "Professor, what year is this?"

"2151."

The whole idiotic impact of his situation stunned Tolliver. What had happened? What had happened to Brown? By now if his fantastic legend were true, he had died again for a crime—two hundred years ago! He had to get back to Brown, that was the only way out. For surely if Brown could do this to him, he could just as easily undo it. But there was no getting back unless—yes, unless Brown were living again in this time!

"Professor Aureole, do you know a Murray Brown?"

The white-bearded man shook his head, profound understanding in his eyes. "Mr. Tolliver, you have been the victim of what you, in your generation, would have called a freak of nature. However, in our time, we dislike phenomena which can't be explained—and so, with your cooperation, we should like to investigate the matter further."

"Of course, of course—" Tolliver murmured absently.

Professor Aureole went on. "I don't think you will have much trouble adjusting to our ways, since this is precisely what you wished for. You will be assigned to the Division of Films, for as yet, we have found no machine that can create



character or fiction. That is all, Mr. Tolliver, and I hope you will be happy."

Tolliver got up. "Why not?"

"Why?" said Professor Aureole, drumming his bony fingers on the glassy desk, "Because Happiness is the only law we recognize. In our time, there is only one crime—and that is Unhappiness."

"That suits me," Tolliver said, reaching across the desk to shake the old man's hand. "I assure you it will make me very unhappy to be unhappy."

In the days that followed Gilder was his constant companion. He saw that Tolliver shed the ancient apparel of his century and donned the new, acted as his guide through the city, and installed him in a one-room, all-equipped apartment near the Film Trust Center. Like a child with a roomful of new toys, Tolliver learned the manipulation of many gadgets, all designed to reduce human effort to an absolute minimum. For days he was fascinated by this complex and amazing education. In his office in the Film Trust Center, in the theaters, in the streets, he noticed that everyone smiled, seemed happy. But the manner of the people puzzled him. Was it false or was it genuine? Even at night, after the work centers and stations had been closed, he watched them and noticed their happiness, everybody following some utilitarian hobby after his or her work duty had been achieved.

At first Tolliver found that he did not miss the things that had once advised or confused his life: the newspapers, the magazines, the advertisements, the investments, the bills. In this world no man was salaried or billed, and all were secure and provided for, each according to his worth, by the High Council of State, headed by Professor Aureole, as Tolliver learned later.

But his job was growing hateful. Every morning he would start to write *Fade in*: on the first page of a projected scenario and find himself unable to go any further. Always he had written in terms of conflict and in the various moods of his characters, but in this world and time such presumption was

impossible. Here everybody smiled and was happy. He brooded about this and thought of seeking other employment, but Professor Aureole was adamantly smiling about it.

"You are not unhappy, are you?" the old Professor asked him.

"No—no," Tolliver quickly replied, remembering their previous conversation. "It's just that I don't know what to write about."

"It takes time," Professor Aureole said. "But you'll learn the knack of writing in our manner."

"I suppose so," Tolliver said, returning a thin smile—and he went back to his job and loafed.

The weeks went by fruitlessly.

Then one day there walked into his cubicle a beautiful girl, a startlingly familiar girl, and if it had not been for the contour chair in which he was sitting, Tolliver would have fallen to the floor in sheer amazement. For he felt sure the girl was Maryanne!

He wanted to shout her name joyously, but he checked himself as he looked up at the coolness of the woman. It was the same woman almost but this one was younger by far. Around her eyes and mouth, he couldn't see the threads of worry and time, and her body was more youthful, more supple. Suddenly he longed for the very sadness of Maryanne's face, longed for a glimpse of Linda and Lonnie, longed for all their arms about his neck, hugging and kissing him, longed even for Maryanne's nagging . . .

"My name is Maria," the girl said; and she went on to tell him that she was an actress appointed to play in a film he was appointed to write.

"I have no play," Tolliver announced bitterly. "I can't write."

She smiled. "The perennial writer's complaint—"

"Look, Maria—or whatever your name is—you go back and tell your boss that I've got nothing for you—"

She studied the writing cubicle, looking from the floor to

the ceiling for concealed wiring. "You sound awfully unhappy, Mr. Tolliver—"

"Well, I am unhappy, damn it!"

Her smile instantly vanished. Her face became serious, and it occurred to Tolliver that hers was the first *serious* face he had encountered here.

"You must not talk like that, Mr. Tolliver," she said guardedly. "Talk like that can get you atomized."

Tolliver looked at her curiously. Her serious face and the talk about being atomized, liquidated, was the first false note in this triumphant Utopia and his mind seized on it. Was it possible that there was a lot of unhappiness around that he didn't know about? Was it possible that many of these people went around with spurious smiles on their faces like Hollywood actors at the sight of a camera? Was all this bogus? Was this vast success story of a society one great big hoax . . . ?

Tolliver suddenly became belligerent. "Why shouldn't I be unhappy if I want to? Am I some bee imprisoned in a honeycomb?"

"Please!" she cried, looking around her again. "You are very fortunate your office isn't wired for sound."

"Wire-tapping? That's old hat, isn't it?"

"Mr. Tolliver," she said quietly. "You are a stranger here. As yet, you are not adjusted intellectually or emotionally—and because of this they might be generous with you—but they won't be with me."

"They?" Tolliver asked. "You are not talking about the famous *They*, I hope. In the old world we had many similar and indefinite references. *They* were always after us for one thing or another. But we were never atomized, which I think is an extremely important distinction between our times."

"This is no place to talk," she said, looking around the room again. "At least, not as you're talking."

"Just as you say—"

"But I know of a place," she added hastily. "If you'd care to go with me?"

He stared at her and then grinned. She got up and smiled.

He took his plastic cap out of his desk and followed her out of the building.

They drove in her beetle-bodied car to the Palisades that edged the Pacific. They sat in the tall grass and looked out to the sea, neither of them saying anything for a long time. The wind blew cool and flicked her hair about her face, reminding him again of how much like Maryanne she was. Lord, he thought, two hundred years ago! But the sea had not changed, thank God!

He watched her trail her fingers through the tops of the blowing grass and then looked out at the blue expanse of the ocean, following the dark line of its infinity.

"You are not happy, Maria?"

She shook her head slowly, sadly. He took her hand in his and held it. She did not withdraw it, but looked at him with a strange longing. It was the same way Maryanne had looked at him, and suddenly she was Marvanne again and not Maria, and he loved her with the same old impulsiveness and excitement. He wanted more than anything now to take this strange girl in this strange century in his arms.

"I love you, Maria," he said.

"We all love each other," she said.

"It's not the same," he said, irritated. "I'm not talking that jargon."

"I know," she said, "but I forget sometimes. With us the sexual mating is something entirely different. It is not the love for one person, as in your time, nor is it the love for each other, as in our time. The mating is by Permit and Compatibility. The love does not enter into it."

"Well, I'll be damned!" Tolliver flung his plastic car to the ground and it crinkled in the grass. "And do you all think like this?"

She smiled demurely. "No, not all of us."

"Tell me what *you* think!"

"All right," she said, looking out to the sea. "That is why I brought you here. I want you to know that in our society there are those who are not happy. There are those who do

not believe. There are men and women who see life differently, who paint pictures and write things secretly, thinkers who think differently—and all of them are hiding their revolt for tomorrow. There are secret places where they meet and speak of olden things, such as the things you best of all understand and remember. Would you like to meet with these people?"

"An underground—?"

"I beg your pardon—"

"Never mind," Tolliver said. "And you are one of these people, Maria?"

"Yes," she said. She got up and pressed back her hair that the wind had disarrayed. "But we must go now. I will take you to them soon."

He saw Gilder every day for the next week, but his thoughts were always of Maria. Once he wrote a poem of her beside the sea, standing in the eternal winds, but he tore it up. He destroyed it, not because he was afraid of being atomized, but because it wasn't good. For days he thought about Maria and her people and wondered why they weren't happy. Surely the High Council wanted the people to be happy. But Happiness, like a good poem, couldn't be dictated or decreed. Happiness—? Happiness is for puppy dogs and rabbits with neither tomorrows nor yesterdays. It is not Happiness, but Freedom that a man longs for and needs.

He was half-finished with a preposterously idyllic screenplay called, for his own ironic amusement, *Smiling Through Life*, when Maria came to visit him three weeks later. This time, as soon as the door was closed behind her, he got up and impetuously threw his arms around her, kissing her neck and ears until she bubbled with laughter at his ardor.

"I love you, Maria," he whispered.

"And I love you," she said, and added quickly, "and without the jargon."

"I want to marry you, Maria. I will get my Permit of Compatibility—"

"It is useless," she said. "You are not yet compatible with

this society. You are some sort of unique experiment they are conducting, a strange guinea pig they have run across and wish to study."

"I'll go to Professor Aureole—"

"That would be the end of both of us," Maria said quietly, looking around fearfully. "If you like I will marry you in the 'underground' as you call it. I am to take you there tonight."

He took her in his arms again, holding her closely, her body soft against him—and across town in the office of Professor Aureole, the High Council of State watched Maria return Tolliver's embrace and could hear his most intimate whispers of endearment . . .

That night Maria and Tolliver parked the lightless car beside a little-used road and then went on foot into the scrubby hills. They walked up a small path that led to a steep, tree-choked ravine and then waited. Down in the ravine there came a sudden cicada thrum and Maria answered it with three high, liquidy bird notes. They went on cautiously until they came to the mouth of a cave hidden in the lush foliage of the hillside.

Inside the cave there was a long, narrow corridorlike passageway that had been cut out of the earth and bolstered like a mine shaft. Maria walked along until they came to a smaller opening in the corridor and then squeezed her body through it. Tolliver followed her.

This was the underground.

Tolliver found himself in a large room, lighted by candles and damp with the ocean seepage. It was all like a scene from a movie drenched in low-key conspiracy: the angular shadows on the walls of the cave, the furtive figures huddled around a long table, the circle of sad faces and glinting eyes. Then he stared in astonishment as he saw at the head of the long table the unmistakable and sardonic visage of Murray Brown.

"Brown!" he cried, moving eagerly toward the small man. Tolliver clutched at his hand and wrung it warmly, almost tearfully. But the small man withdrew his hand in embarrassment.

"I'm afraid you've made some mistake, Comrade. My name is Jansen . . ."

"Don't you remember the club, the golf round? We got drunk together and you gave me the pill . . ."

Jansen frowned. "When was this?"

"In fifty-one! Nineteen fifty-one!"

"I wasn't born then," Jansen said; but then he looked at Tolliver with his ageless eyes and asked with an amused wink, "Are you happier now, Tolliver?"

Tolliver started to shake his head, but Maria was already introducing him to the assembled people, more than fifty men and women. These were the malcontents, the rebels. A priestly-looking man, black-robed, came up to him and showed him the precious relics of the past that they had preserved unlawfully: a rare copy of the King James Bible, a gold wedding band for marriage ceremonies, and a photostatic copy of the Bill of Rights. In a dark corner someone was practicing on a flute the music of Mendelssohn.

Tolliver held Maria close to him.

"Shall we proceed with the marriage—" the priestly looking man began; but suddenly a young man squeezed his body through the small aperture and shouted breathlessly, his face white with terror, his eyes huge with excitement, "They're coming! The GHU!"

At once everyone started scurrying out a back exit, lugging their precious relics with them. Tolliver stopped with Maria, waiting for Jansen.

"What's happening?" he asked.

"It's the Guardians of Human Utopia," Jansen said, pushing Tolliver and Maria ahead of him. "Go out—quickly!"

Maria turned and started through the small opening, pulling Tolliver's arm. "Follow me. We have an escape tunnel!"

Tolliver started to follow her into the dark passage where the others had vanished, but he stopped and came back into the cave.

"Aren't you coming?" he asked Jansen.

Jansen shook his head and sat down. "It will momentarily

satisfy the authorities to find me. It will help the others escape. You had better hurry, Tolliver."

"Are you crazy?" Tolliver asked, yanking Jansen to his feet. "If anybody stays, I'm staying! The underground needs you—"

Jansen's eyes misted and he spoke with a beseeching earnestness. "Do you—want to—die for me?"

Tolliver began to push Jansen ahead of him to the cave opening, but immediately six blond giants equipped with pen-sized guns burst into the room and seized both of them. Jansen was crying!

The High Council was waiting for them when they were brought in by the GHU. Seven white-haired men were ranged behind a long, desklike table. Tolliver and Jansen were placed in chairs facing them and at the door, standing stiffly, were the big smiling Guardians. Professor Aureole was the spokesman for the Council.

"You both realize, of course, what this means?"

Jansen was silent and indifferent, his thoughts a thousand years away. Tolliver answered in sudden indignation, "How can you operate a society based on Happiness when you make a crime of despair? No man can aspire to anything without making some mistake, without in some way coming to grief, without the sadness that is evoked by all dreaming!"

Jansen smiled ironically. "Don't waste your words on them, Tolliver. Just look at them!"

The Court of ancient men, the High Council, smiled in a kind of urbane unison; and Professor Aureole, ignoring Jansen, said to Tolliver, "There is of course much excuse for you. You are, as I pointed out before, an anachronism, a freak of astrophysics. But now you are dangerous and must be removed. Remember, it's not that we bear you the least ill feeling, but you represent an opinion no longer valid or desirable—and we will not patronize you by permitting you to exist. Believe us, we destroy you with the kindest feelings and without rancor."

He smiled pleasantly and waved his bony hand to the Guardians. Tolliver and Jansen were led away.



"What now?" Tolliver asked. They had been placed together in a small room that afforded a good view of the sea and sky. They were alone in the room, listening to the rhythmic hiss of the ocean.

"It will happen, but we will feel nothing," Jansen said. "I want to thank you, Mr. Tolliver. Perhaps, from now on, I may die forever like other men."

Tolliver started to say something, but suddenly Jansen vanished. He was no longer in the room, no longer visible, and he realized with anguished amazement that the small man had been atomized. For a wild moment he wanted to run, to cry out something, anything, and then a whiteness stabbed his brain and he felt himself becoming weightless and light as air. There was a moment of molecular ecstasy as he felt himself dissolving, and then there was only a feeling of enveloping infinity, a feeling that he was about to sense the secret of time itself, and then he became blank . . .

When Sam Tolliver opened his eyes it felt as though he had just awakened from a nightmarish slumber. His flesh seemed strangely heavy and his head ached. He was lying on a flat table, looking up into the wrinkled and genial face of Hurley, the masseur.

"You all right now?" Hurley asked.

"Yes, yes—" Tolliver said slowly, getting to his feet. He looked around him puzzled, but then a great urge seized him to rush home to Maryanne and the kids. He gave Hurley a dollar and rushed out of the locker room.

"Have a nice game, Mr. Tolliver?" It was Benny, the parking attendant.

"Yes, thank you," Tolliver said, getting into his car. "Has Mr. Brown left?"

"Yes, Mr. Tolliver. He left a while ago with two fellows I never saw before. They came in a big black limousine."

The words froze Tolliver's hands to the steering wheel. Brown or Jansen? He was confused. Suddenly the thought of Maryanne—or was it Maria?—drove him forward and his car lurched out of the parking lot on to the boulevard. He tried

to shake the hang-over out of his head, but the numbing pain persisted. Brown, Jansen, Maryanne, Maria . . .

At the corner of Pico and Manning he rushed the yellow light, and, a moment later, he heard the sputtering of a motorcycle behind him. A policeman motioned him to the curb.

"What's your hurry, mister?"

"I'm sorry, officer. But I want to get home to my wife—"

"Let me see your driver's license," the cop said, opening up his pad. "So you want to see your wife? How long have you been married—a week?"

Tolliver smiled. "No, sir. Twelve years."

The policeman scratched his head and stared at Tolliver's exuberant face. Tolliver wanted to say, "Look, officer, my wife's getting older and grayer and she nags me sometimes, she's mismanaging my house and my two wonderful kids, but I'm in love with her, do you understand? I'm in love with my crazy, nagging, unpredictable wife!"

The policeman continued writing, saying, "All I can say is—the world is just about as crazy as it can get."

Tolliver laughed slightly hysterically. "Oh, no it's not! The world is right now in better shape than you think. Now let's have that ticket . . . !"

## Kris Neville BETTYANN

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*In discussing this anthology with Anthony Boucher, Kris Neville's name was mentioned as a possible contributor. Tony said Neville was one of the most talented and promising young writers the field had developed in years. This opinion was further corroborated by Forrest Ackerman, himself renowned in science-fiction circles as writer, agent, and general pundit. After reading Neville's work we asked him for a story, and this beautiful, heart-warming tale of an ancient and alien people and a wonderful, almost human girl is the result. Few will think of Bettyann as just another short story. It is truly one to be remembered, and conclusive evidence that the author is headed for a very bright future in the literary world.*

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IT BEGAN TO SPIT SNOW, and the car skidded slightly on the wet pavement.

"Please drive a little slower," the woman said, and the baby began to fret.

The man glanced at the luminous watch dial. "We've got to hurry," he said.

"They'll wait," the woman said. "Hush," she said softly to the baby.

The man bent forward slightly, his eyes staring out into the darkness. Snow splattered against the windshield to be smeared away by the fast-ticking windshield wiper.

"They'll think something's happened to us, and they'll go on," he said.

"No, they won't," she said. She petted the baby.

The man slowed the car for an upward curve that bent around a dripping cliff.

"What does the mileage gauge say?" he asked.

"Ten thousand, one hundred and . . . nine," the woman said, reading slowly by the dim dashlight.

"In about ten miles, then, we better start looking for the cutoff."

"We've got nearly half an hour, so please slow down," she said.

Reluctantly he eased up the footfeed.

The baby cried restlessly.

"She's in the body nicely," the woman said. "She wears it better than we do."

"We'll have trouble getting her out," he said. "It's all she knows."

They were silent for a moment, and the tires sizzled. Then the woman said, "Did you enjoy it?"

"It was interesting. Very pretty little world. Absorbing greens, I should say."

"There was one nice sunset."

"The planet near Elsini is better for sunsets: remember the one in which the cloud formations . . . ?"

"Please drive slower, dear! It makes me nervous."

Annoyed, he looked again at his watch.

"We've got plenty of time," she said.

"It's quite a distance down the cutoff. It's nearly a mile, remember, to that awful-looking white house; and they're far enough beyond so the ship will be out of sight."

The woman fondled the baby. "It's a nice planet, in its way; not all hard, not all soft . . . She's actually growing in this body, have you noticed? She's gained several pounds, I imagine. Just look how fat her arms are!"

"After all, it's the only one she knows."

"Dear! This car is awkward on a road like this. So . . ."

"We're almost to the cutoff."

"Look out! Look out!" she screamed in terror.

It was a truck. It was jack-knifed across the pavement. The car rushed up the steep grade to meet it. And the headlights of the car patterned briefly the outline of the truck driver, lying on his back on the wet concrete, tinkering with one of the multiple-tired rear wheels.

The driver of the car slammed in the brake pedal. The woman gasped. And the car swayed sickeningly. It leaped to the shoulder of the road, flashed by the stalled truck, and continued up the grade. The man fought the steering wheel, struggling to wrench the car back onto the pavement. The front wheels locked in a rut. Grunting explosively, the man jerked the steering wheel savagely to the left; it slipped from his hands, and the still-hurting car was free. The car leaped and bounced and teetered for an infinite second and crashed down sideways. It turned over and over until it half bent around a thick cedar tree nearly twenty yards down the slope. It lay quiet with one of its front wheels spinning leisurely.

The man had fallen across the woman; neither body moved; and slowly, second by second, life bled away, and the two bodies crumbled inward and dissolved, and all that was left was fine grayish powder.

Up on the road, the truck driver, white-faced, waved his flashlight beam in the direction of the wreck. For a long moment he heard nothing but the monotonous drip of water from a tree across the road.

Then he heard, very distinctly, a baby crying.

For a long time after the accident, for an eternity after the accident, Bettyann (although that was not yet her name) knew a puzzling progression of hands and faces and lights and shadows. At first, and for half her life and more than half, there had been a great, unlocalized pain. She cried whenever a nurse brushed her upper left side, but she could not associate the terrifying pain with the nurse's act, or ever quite understand the fear that came with a certain footstep.

At first the hands that touched her seemed no nearer than

the far and dimly seen walls. Things existed, but they had no relation to each other and none to her.

Objects first began to order themselves when she became aware that the addition of something to her lips produced the cessation of a sharp, painlike pang not at her lips. Later, she found that the wall of the crib arrested the motion of her fist. And after that, as knowledge of space, bit by bit, became a part of her, she was acutely aware of the increasing rhythm of light and darkness.

Later still, she was able to localize the great pain, but by then it was not nearly so severe. It was in the left side of her body and eventually in the region of her left shoulder. Involuntarily, muscles seemed to want to exercise a second arm there; but the arm did not respond; it lay inert. One day she realized that the fist of the arm was tightly clenched. She tried to flex the fingers, but they would not flex. She cried herself to sleep.

Time began to move faster after she was transferred from the hospital to the State Home for Orphan Children, but the months were still long, because each was still so large a part of her total existence. At length there came the day when her routine of feeding, exercise, and sleep was broken by strange perfume and by new, quiet voices in kind-toned gabble, and soft, gentle hands. The hands most of all were pleasant.

"Isn't she a darling little girl?" the woman said, and the man agreed, and the nurse said, "Her arm was injured in an accident. She'll never have the use of it." And the man and woman murmured sympathetically.

Later, although Bettyann could not know this, the man and woman spoke with the gray-haired lady superintendent; and after that, they went away to think over all the implications of adopting a child with only one good arm.

The car in which Bettyann had been found lay rusting in a scrap heap. The dust on the seat was gone as thoroughly as yesterday's sunlight. The investigation of the accident was closed. And stranger things had happened before and will happen again in the memory of man than a demolished car and a deserted baby.

The soft hands remained in Bettyann's memory, and vaguely discontent, she wanted them to return.

When finally the hands did return (and Bettyann was now her name), she gurgled happily, and upon being lifted, she kicked her feet in excitement.

Solemnly, as though Bettyann could understand the words, the superintendent said, "This is your new mother, Bettyann. Momma Jane and Daddy Dave."

And because she was pleased, Bettyann told them what the nurse who fed her always said: "Da da."

The woman blinked her eyes, looking down at the infant, and said, "Would you like to go home with us, Bettyann?" And the man cleared his throat.

The superintendent's eyes sparkled, and she smiled almost enviously, "I'm sure she'll be the kind of a daughter you deserve, Mrs. Seldon."

"Of course she will!" Mr. Seldon said. "And smart! She just said da da, didn't she? She's as smart as a tree full of owls already."

His wife said, "At first we'd half planned on a child a little older. In fact, we weren't even sure we wanted a girl at all. Until we saw Bettyann."

After more words, equally unintelligible to her, Bettyann felt a blanket being wrapped tightly over her body, and after that she felt bright sunshine on her face and then a sickening forward movement and strange noises. Soon the movement became mixed completely with the sound and everything was a hurrying purr except for the bobbing green tassel from Mother Jane's bonnet and the drowsy murmur of Daddy Dave's voice.

Jane studied Bettyann's fist with minute attention, and Bettyann liked the feeling of the warm palm around her hand.

"They're awfully small, the fingers," Jane said.

"Let's see," he said, glancing over quickly. "Hummm. They are, at that. When we get home, you know, we'll have to get a birthday cake for her. I forgot it."

"Isn't she a little young for that?"

"I wouldn't say so, no. I'm sure I had one, my first birth-

day. I had a cake every birthday. When I went to college, my great-aunt, Amelia, sent me a cake my freshman year, as I remember, and she'd wrapped up nineteen little candles in waxed paper and laid them right on top. Of course she'll have to have a cake."

Watching Bettyann, Jane said, "I think I'd rather not know her real birthday."

"Eh? And why not?"

"To make it the day we take her home, that makes it seem as if she's just been drifting around somewhere, waiting for us to come along."

Dave muttered happily to himself.

After a moment, she said, "Dave, dear. You don't really suppose the parents *will* turn up?"

"Of course they won't turn up!" he snapped, suddenly almost angry. "What the devil should they turn up for? After running off and leaving her in the wreck like that!"

"That's what I think, too. But you're not worried?"

He puffed his cheeks. "Even if they did, how could they get her back? What difference would it make?"

Bettyann was five, and it was her last spring before school, and she sat at the window staring longingly into the forbidden yard. She and Jane had had a postbreakfast clash about the toy doll. ("Bettyann, you simply must *not* leave your toys scattered about where someone's liable to stumble over them.") It was at least the tenth offense in the last two months, and Jane, at last becoming angry, had punished her.

All morning she sat at the window pensive and sad, and lunch eaten, she resumed her post. Her patience was rewarded when finally, relenting, as Bettyann intended she should, the severity of the confinement, Jane said, her voice slightly amused, "Very well. You may go outside now."

Bettyann slipped from the chair, her lips tucked into determined resistance. She went to the door without a word, and through it, proudly, into the sunshine. She was stubbornly indignant, and her childish jaw was set with unshakable resolve. She went directly from the porch, through the small



cherry orchard, to the wealth of hollyhocks along the alley fence. She found a bee upon the lip of one of the flowers, a stunted plant within her reach, and with scarcely an instant's hesitation, she scooped up the bee and imprisoned it in her good right hand. She knew that Momma Jane would feel very sorry when she got stung. Daddy Dave, were he home, would chuckle not unkindly at the sting and say, "It'll feel better when it quits hurting"—his favorite statement for greeting her, oh so important scratches and bruises, a statement which infuriated her only to make her laugh through angry tears. But Momma Jane, seeing the savage hurt, would run to her and say, "Now, dear," kissing it, "let Mother put something on the nasty old pain right away."

The bee, when it finally stung her, hurt much worse than she had imagined it would, and she slapped her hand desperately against her dress to rid herself of the uncooperative insect. Then she ran toward the house crying, "I got stung! I got stung by a beel!"

The kitchen window faced the alley fence, and Jane stood beside it, waiting for her. She had her hands firmly planted on her hips, and when Bettyann rushed into the kitchen, she said, calmly, "I saw you deliberately pick up that bee, dear."

Bettyann blinked her eyes in surprise. "You did?"

"I most certainly did."

When she came to realize that the expected sympathy would not be forthcoming, Bettyann said, "I wish I hadn't, now." She left the kitchen and went to her room, and after crying a bit in frustration, she saw the humor of the situation, and she laughed about it, and eventually the bee sting stopped hurting.

Once more during the final, preschool summer, she received a bee sting, quite accidentally, this time. It was promptly administered to. And aside from the bees, of course, the summer was a pleasant one, and when fall finally came, as, she felt, it well might not have, Bettyann knew a touch of genuine sadness. Her question of the previous winter returned to puzzle her: Why must everything die in wintertime when we need the live greenness most of all? But as summer continued

to fade away with quiet inevitability, she began to look forward, half fearful, half excited, to the new mystery into which she was shortly to be initiated.

On the first day, Jane walked with her to a foreboding white rock building from which she remembered having heard pleasant laughter the previous spring, and there introduced her to a not at all terrifying person who was to be her teacher for a whole, long year. She felt momentary fear, after Jane had gone, at being in a strange room, surrounded by strange and possibly hostile faces. She felt, for the briefest moment, as if she had broken away entirely from the certain security of the familiar home; the flower bed, the garden, the weathered oak, all solid and real, now seemed in memory, substanceless. She wanted desperately to rush after Momma Jane and run with her down the tree-lined walk, hurrying as fast as her feet would go, because the flower bed, the garden, and the weathered oak might not be there if she waited one endless hour. (Aunt Bessie had said to Momma Jane, "That's when you first begin to lose them. They're never quite the same after that. The teachers manage to take them away from you." To which Daddy Dave had said, "Nonsense, Bessie. She is, after all, only five." "But then, I suppose," Aunt Bessie had said, "it won't seem quite so bad for *you*, Jane, dear, as it would for—for, well, you know . . ." At which Momma Jane's face had turned very red. And Bettyann had wanted to ask why that should be.)

After the initial shock of adjustment, Bettyann found the strange faces around her to be friendly. The first, bashful smiles of acquaintance came to be smiles of pleased recognition. Days began to hurry toward Christmas. And then, all at once, the holidays had come and gone, and bright, washed faces told with excited tongues of wonderful gifts from Santa Claus. And because there were so many new things to be done, it seemed that in no time at all sweet, lazy spring was back.

Just three weeks before school was dismissed, Miss Collier, the teacher, distributed finger-painting sets. "You'll get to play with sets like these all next year," she explained. And

within fifteen minutes, she was standing over Bettyann's desk. Bettyann was working excitedly with brilliant colors on large, heavy paper. "What do you think your picture looks like, Bettyann? Is it supposed to be a big, brown cow or what?" Still working, Bettyann said, "It's a man in a tree." "Oh?" "Yes," Bettyann said, wrinkling her forehead, "the tree bark's all crum'led up, and the man's face is all crum'led up—right in the bark." "How very odd," Miss Collier said. "It looks as if you really painted it in, once I look for it." "I did." "No, child: I meant on purpose." "It *was* on purpose," Bettyann insisted, and Miss Collier laughed, rumpling her hair, "You should be a painter, then." After Miss Collier had gone, disappointed at being misunderstood, Bettyann drew her fingers through the man in the tree and began to fashion the figure of a little girl. She tried to make the little girl's face seem as though you were looking at it from two directions at once.

During the final week of the school year, Miss Collier gave the children a series of simple aptitude tests. (Miss Collier was a recent college graduate.) Bettyann understood that the results would be very important throughout all the eight grades, so she tried as hard as she could. Later, when the principal was congratulating Miss Collier on her efficiency, while wondering what, exactly, should be done with the results of it, Miss Collier said, "This one, here, on Bettyann Seldon. She's certainly very intelligent, but I couldn't help feeling that the tests weren't getting at her real abilities; she seemed only half tested. I made a note about it on her form." "Oh, yes, I see," said the principal. "Of course," Miss Collier said, "I only had three units of elementary testing." And the principal, who had had none, remarked, uncomfortably, that he was sure it would be all very helpful and that he couldn't expect, after all, his teachers to know everything.

Bettyann was in the second grade for less than a month when one of her crayon pictures ("Almost good enough to be the work of an eighth grader") was posted on the big bulletin board in the main hall. Of another of her drawings, however, a semi-exploded view of a house with displaced hedge and chimney and furniture floating around the walls, her teacher

said, "A little too unreal." And Bettyann resolved to be more careful in the future, for she did not want to be misunderstood.

She found the very elementary reading baffling until, midway through the year, she quit trying to associate the words with the pictures in the reader and began associating them with speech: and after that, reading was easy. She found in the group games and for ball passing in particular, that, with increasing familiarity, the shriveled arm presented scarcely any handicap.

But during the last part of that year and all of the next, her third, she came more and more to feel estranged from her classmates, and to a lesser degree, from her teachers, and even, but to a lesser degree still, from her parents. In classroom she came to fear that at any moment an unfortunate remark would elicit spasms of laughter; and at home she felt that there were things neither Jane nor Dave could understand, not in the way she understood, no matter how they might try, and failing to understand would, if she spoke of them, misunderstand not the thing itself but her for speaking. She withdrew inch by inch and became silent when others laughed and hesitant when others spoke boldly. ("She's a shy and sensitive child.")

Beginning her fourth year of school, no more than a week after the first session, one late autumn afternoon it was, when for the first parent-teachers' meeting, class was dismissed early and still unacquainted children lingered in the schoolyard, Bettyann saw one of the older girls, a seventh or eighth grader, run from the empty teeters, kicking up white sand with flying tennis shoes, toward a vacant classroom, and she cried silently as she ran. Bettyann could see no reason for her action: the girl had been some distance from the nearest child. In that moment, Bettyann learned, and it was feeling more than thought, a second of certain insight, that each person was unique unto himself, and the memory of the tearful face told her that each, to his own degree, is misunderstood; and she, perhaps no more alone than the older girl, no more misunderstood than all the rest.

She was to have the same lesson repeated once more before she became a fifth grader. The second incident occurred not at school but while the class, under the supervision of Mrs. Fox, the eighth grade teacher, who, Bettyann knew, went off to herself for a few minutes upon arrival to smoke a forbidden cigarette, was on a tour of the zoo some eighteen miles away in Joplin. The class went from Mark Twain School in a chartered bus, each child but Elmer carrying lunch in a brown paper bag. (Elmer carried a grown-up lunch box.) Within the park, for it was called a park rather than a zoo, there were many strange and wonderful and exciting animals. And when the eager class stopped beside the kangaroo, Willie, one of the smaller, less well-dressed boys, said, "Look! Bettyann's got a *kangaroo's* arm!" Bettyann, puzzled, looked at the kangaroo, frowned momentarily, and answered, "No, the kangaroo's arms are both all right; there's nothing wrong with either of them." Then she realized that the comparison was not based upon physical similarity. There had been resentment in Willie's voice, and viciousness, too. She knew of no offense that she had given him. She could not remember even speaking to him more than once or twice for he sat across the room from her and usually played by himself during recess. There was certainly no one-to-one cause and effect relationship. And, in thinking the incident over later, she wondered how it might be generalized in a picture of human relations: a group of people, perhaps, in pairs, each member of the pair chained to all the rest, with everyone pulling against the chains in an attempt to get closer to his partner.

She was supposed to skip the fifth grade; Dave, however, would not permit it. "She started school early as it is." And Jane agreed after the first excitement of her pride passed: "It wouldn't be fair for her to be almost two years younger than the others when she gets to high school." "And college," Dave added proudly. The parents nodded, and Dave held Bettyann on his lap and said, "She's as smart as a tree full of owls," and Jane said, "Be careful, Dave, or she'll grow too big for her britches." Dave said, "Nonsense. It gives her self-confidence."

All during her fifth year in school Bettyann made a special

effort to accept the occasional strangeness of her playmates, to understand, as nearly as she could, their attitudes, and to adopt those attitudes for her own. At first it required conscious effort; later, it became automatic; and, as the school year drew to an end, she thought much as her playmates thought.

Spring came and then summer. And alone, one hot afternoon, she went to the flock of English sparrows on the lawn before the house and picked up one, gently, in her hand and held it to her face and cheeped to it. Dave came out, letting the screen door slam, and the birds flew in terror, and Dave said, "How the devil did you manage to slip up that close to them, Bettyann?" Laughing, she answered, "I just did." It occurred to her, then, to ask the question of herself; but there was no answer other than the one she had given. "I must have just been thinking right," she amplified, and Dave snorted, "Damned sparrows'll have the whole country some day." She turned to watch the sparrows fly from their tree limbs to settle a safe distance away in the dust of the driveway. And watching them fly, it seemed that she could, if she only knew how, join them and be as free to sail the skies as they. For an instant she knew great longing, longing to be released from the narrow, confining space of her world; to float, as the song said, where the south winds rise; to be, as the birds . . . And the feeling passed: she was content. Here, around her, the quiet, sleepy afternoon . . . She smiled, thinking of the light restrictions on her life: dishes to do, for which, of course, she was paid: "Helping around the house," Dave's inclusive phrase that meant very little; attending the long, sleepy Sunday school, which Jane said, "Won't do any harm . . ." No, here in the hot afternoon she was free; and here, with the beat of town life around her, exciting, she was happy, and she was at a loss to understand the vast longing of a moment before.

The summer was unusually dry and she played outside a great deal, went to one wiener roast, attended a blanket party at Doris Heisten's house seven miles out in the country, and spent one week with Aunt Bessie at Lakeside. When the rains finally came they came in torrents that made the yard a welter of mud and the outside an extremely unattractive place: the

rains flattened the dying hollyhocks, and later the first day, savage hail sheared leaves and twigs from the cherry trees and broke the glass front out of Al's Grocery across the street. She located *David Copperfield* in Dave's haphazard collection of books. There were perhaps twenty volumes in all, some left over from college, some purchased during a half year of enlightenment, when he was a member of The Book-of-the-Month Club. She was attracted by the name, a copperfield, in her imagination, being an endless stretch of copper stalks, glistening in the sunlight, row on row, like tall corn. It took her several days of conscientious reading to finish the book, and all the while, for sleepy background, the rain drummed deliciously on the roof and dripped from the eaves and moved upon the windowpanes. She did not understand all of it, but she laughed with Mr. Micawber and cried when Dora died. And when the book was done, she felt glad and proud, although she could not understand quite why she should. It was a strange book, and unreal. But unreal in a different way than *Alice In Wonderland*, which she had read twice, each time feeling that she was missing something of the utmost importance.

Time hung poised with the rain, but finally sunny skies came and school and winter and then always-exciting spring again. But this spring, before her eighth year of school, was not the same as the ones that had gone before. The adults were quiet and waiting; and they seemed about to bubble over with some expected excitement. In early May the excitement broke, and the war in Europe was over. Everyone cheered and cried and was happy. But beneath that, Bettyann felt, sad and still, a little guilty perhaps because the war had eaten deep into men's hearts and burned there like a horrible conscience. Just before school began again, the other war, too, ended, and the people were deeply frightened at the way it had happened. But peace was a vast relief, and without fully knowing of war, Bettyann cried when she heard the news.

Bettyann's grade school teachers all agreed that she was not quite like the rest of the children. ("All I know," Mrs. Fox said, "is that she had an absolutely phenomenal grasp of historical

time.") And her difference, whatever it was, was not altogether reflected in her superior grades. It was deeper than that, deeper, even, than her conduct: for she played as the others played, recited much as they recited but with occasional flashes of adult perspective, teased other girls about boy friends but was never teased in return, passed notes surreptitiously in class, and blushed whenever she was caught chewing gum. The deep difference, in the final analysis, it must have seemed to the teachers, was that she should be quiet and pensive and reserved, and that she completely refused to be.

As everyone expected, she graduated from the eighth grade at the top of her class. And then, during the prehigh school vacation, the frightening biological change came, and she became hurt and puzzled, and for the second time she withdrew into herself. (It was that summer that Jane and Dave told her of the adoption: and they attributed her new reserve as much to that as to anything else.)

The sense of having been unfairly imprisoned by nature, of having been tied in some vague way against her will to a new and not altogether likable body, persisted into her freshman year. There were flashes of acute embarrassment, not for any act, but, in surprising moments, perhaps while reciting at her desk, for existence itself. And always it seemed that just beneath the borderline of consciousness there lay a way for her to escape from everything that oppressed her.

Her art, so hopefully displayed and marveled at in grade school, no longer interested her; ambition lay dormant. Waiting, she instinctively realized, to be released by more knowledge and to be given direction by increased insight; and some day, in full maturation, many things would be possible for her; but not now. She was listless at her books; school bored her. She half wanted, more in daydream fantasy than anything else, to become a . . . an airplane pilot—or explorer—or gambler—or race car driver—or something else in revolt against this weak, feminine body. (Dave jokingly said, "A girl ought to know what she wants to be by the time she's in *high school*,"



and she answered, genuinely concerned, "I wish I did; I wish I did.")

The year wore on exasperatingly. Until, one day in late November (but almost a month beforehand!), the boy who sat across from her in general science class, Bill Northway, asked her to the holiday freshman prom, and she came home enthusiastic to announce: "I've got to learn to dance!"

Dave received the news with the false surprise of elevated eyebrows, and for a moment she was afraid he would refuse her request. But he nodded his head and said gravely, too gravely, "We'll have to see about it," which, she knew, meant, "Yes." The next Saturday afternoon, with a three o'clock appointment, she went to Zobel's Studio For The Dance. The studio was no more than one room above a bar, just off the Square, and the music was from a portable phonograph and scratchy, fox trot records. Often the fox trots were only dimly heard above the stentorian bellow of the jukebox below. Mr. Zobel, a slender, effeminate man, had one assistant, a willowy blonde, Mrs. Hawkins, who danced with the older boys, those who objected to dancing with Mr. Zobel. It was the only studio in town, and Mr. Zobel taught tap and ballet as well as ballroom, and rumor said that he once danced in night clubs in the West and had a movie contract until something happened that led immediately to his return to his parents' home and the subsequent establishment of the studio. Bettvann had pliant movements, and she molded easily to Mr. Zobel's discreet lead, and, after two private lessons, dancing, with an uncanny ability to anticipate his steps, became as natural for her as walking. And after the holiday prom, she was happy again, and reconciled to the no longer quite so new body.

Social science, as the elementary course in government was called, was first to prick her awakening interest, early in the second semester, and she began to read, avidly, the front page of the newspaper and ask puzzled questions, all of which, to the best of his ability, Dave tried to answer, and, when she appeared unduly depressed at some of the information, he quieted her with, "After all, honey, we don't live in the best of all possible worlds: it's just the best we have."

She checked out the two books on government from the school library, and, in further search in the public library, came across, quite accidentally, while browsing through the three hundreds (the assistant librarian had forgotten it was not to be filed in the stacks open to the public) *Das Kapital*. Miss Stemy the librarian said when Bettyann brought the book to the desk, "Aren't you a little young for such heavy reading, Bettyann? Wouldn't you like better an adventure novel or something like that?" But Bettyann said, "I'd like this, Miss Stemy, if you don't mind," and Miss Stemy, who was an old friend of the family and very fond of Bettyann, said, "Of course, my dear, if you wish it." And later she phoned Dave to say, "I thought you might like to know your daughter is taking up *Das Kapital*." "She is, is she? She's a curious little devil, all right," Dave said. "Then you don't mind my letting her have it?" "Oh, I don't think it'll completely corrupt her mind," Dave said, "but please, Lee, if she comes in after Krafft-Ebing, don't let her have that. Not until her next birthday, at any rate."

Bettyann understood very little of *Das Kapital*; but the *Communist Manifesto* at the end of the book made her blood sing with enthusiasm. She felt she should do something for the workers immediately, and she went to Dave, who, after listening tolerantly to her excited speech, agreed that a sense of indignation at social injustice is invaluable, but, unfortunately, due to the absence of a revolutionary movement at the moment which had the people's welfare at heart, he was afraid there was very little one small girl could do; and that she'd have to content herself with such unexciting but necessary jobs as helping with the next Red Cross and Community Chest campaigns.

During the summer her enthusiasm for social science waned. By the beginning of the second year, she had taken up with almost crusading zeal the pursuit of a new occupation. She was determined to become a doctor, or failing that, a nurse. She talked it over with Dave. Dave agreed that it was a worthwhile career and that it had many rewards. "But you've got lots of time to decide," he said, reversing, it seemed to Betty-

ann, his previous stand. And Jane, seeing her idealism, encouraged it soberly, but with equal restraint. Neither of them wanted to see the idealism expand unnaturally to the point where the world would crush it, and disillusioned by asking too much, make Bettyann cynical and hard in automatic response.

"There's so much to do!" Bettyann cried. "So much that *needs* being done!" Dave said, "But it takes a long time and a hot oven even to hatch an ostrich egg." And Bettyann laughed, wanting to say, Of course, I know that. Dave said, "Society, I'm afraid, is pretty complex. Things that look simple frequently aren't." "Being a doctor's simple," Bettyann said. And Jane said, "It all depends on the kind of person you are."

She began to draw again, mostly pen and ink sketches, carefully, painstakingly wrought, but this time the drawings were abstract and personal, devoid of meaning for any save herself, and she burned them after they were completed. She could feel the growth of power, the technical mastery of line and perspective, a growth that would some day, when she was ready, permit her to do pictures that would say something to others as well, and something important, too, which, as yet, she had only the merest inkling of. She made the beginning tries at reading poetry (she liked best Emily Dickinson), and she discovered the adult short story in the O. Henry award volumes. She located them neatly arranged in dusty rows by the south window of the public library. The stories seemed to say a great deal about life, but it did not seem possible to put what was said in words other than the authors'. And society, she began to realize, *was* complex, and again she was lost and uncertain.

"Silly, romantic little fool!" she told herself, when she let her emotions be caught up and involved in something beyond her immediate life. She saw a picture of the Great Pyramid, and she was overcome by the grandeur of human effort and the sad, defiant presumption of a forgotten man, and she wanted to write poetry about the great ebb and swell of human life, something like Sandburg's *The People, Yes*. (She had read an excerpt from it, and the title haunted her, and

later, when she learned that Hamilton called the people "the beast" she could not help thinking, Yes, but the people, yes!)

Toward spring of her second year, at the fourth all-school assembly in the auditorium after the holidays, the principal announced, to her complete surprise (she had been carrying on a whispered conversation with Bill Northway seated beside her), that she had been selected by the faculty as the Outstanding Sophomore and would be sent, all expenses paid, by the Federated Women's Clubs on a one-day trip to Jefferson City, the state capital, next Friday.

Friday came quickly. And she found herself in Jefferson City admiring Thomas Hart Benton's murals and Carthage Marble. She had tea in the Governor's Mansion and actually talked for a few moments, alone, with the governor's wife, an embarrassed sparrow of a woman who seemed flattered that Bettyann should notice her to say: "It must be tiresome to have so many strangers in your house like this," to which the governor's wife replied with an almost defeated sigh, "It is, sometimes, my dear," and then brightly, as if it were amusing and yet important, "Did you know the high school groups are the worst about the silverware? We lose thirty or forty spoons every time." Bettyann laughed and said, "I must take a spoon, then, mustn't I, to avoid being different?" So, conspiratorially, the governor's wife went to the table where the lemon ice was being served, and took a silver spoon, wrapped it in a paper napkin, and carried it back to Bettyann. "Don't let them see you," she whispered. "Of course they wouldn't *say* anything. Votes, you know. But it's always best not to let them see you."

After that, the school year closed explosively, and Bettyann, over Jane's halfhearted opposition, got a job in Scot's Five & Ten, where, for nearly three months, she waited on and came to know the townspeople. And as she came to know them, all of them, the petty and haggling, the self-consciously magnanimous over a dropped penny, the aggressive, the shy, the bold, the frightened, she knew that there was an infinite variety, and that very little was constant except, perhaps, the expression deep in their eyes, and nothing was certain but the multiplicity of ambitions, hopes, fears, desires.

There was much not to be forgotten: "Whistling" Red, a wizened man (a retired farmer, an exbootlegger, a renegade Catholic priest: there were many stories about his unknown past occupation) who whistled tunelessly to himself wherever he went and who attended every funeral and always cried into a big linen handkerchief. "I go for the music," he confided to Bettyann. And Ed Barnett, who fell four stories from the Drake Hotel to the sidewalk and walked away without even a bruise. And William Seiner, who shaved his head every Monday because he was afraid of dandruff. And Miss Leonard, who, it was said, got mad when her sister married and stayed in bed for twenty years out of pique. She was a prim old maid with bright brown eyes, and she chuckled when she told Bettyann, "Get a man, child," winking, "Get a *man*."

There were these, "Whistling" Red, Ed Barnett, William Seiner, and Miss Leonard, and a hundred more besides; and the days were warm and happy. Bill took her several times to the movies and once skating and twice swimming. And there were dates with other boys, and one of them, one evening, quoted a great deal of the poetry of a man named Swinburne: the boy looked very soulful when he quoted it, and she wanted to laugh, but she was too polite.

In her junior year she had to write fiction for the English class. In her first composition, she used what she thought to be a new style for description. But as the teacher pointed out, in such passages as "Creeping moonlight genuflected at gas-light shadows, writhing," the style rather got in the way of the thought, making the whole more meaningless than necessary; and she agreed. (Always, at every turn, in painting, with prose, in conversation, there was the difficulty of communicating.)

"Look at the yard," she said to Bill, while the two of them sat on her quiet front porch swing, "and tell me what you see."

"Well, let's see," he said, pretending seriousness, as he frequently did, without, she knew, ever taking her seriously. "There's the grass. Yes, that. And there's the moonlight, of course. And the shadows from the old oak tree, and then there's the sidewalk with cracks in it, and the hedge . . ."

Bettyann wanted to explain that one might, in addition to

seeing the physical details, see also the relation between them, or one of the many relations between them, that caused everything to be ordered into a pattern. "There's first of all aliveness and deadness," she said. "Look how they're balanced against each other. See how soft the aliveness is and how hard the deadness is. Look at the aliveness of the grass and the oak; and the deadness of the sidewalk and the shadows. See how the leaves seem to suck at the moonlight and how the tree bark lies inert before it."

"Hummm," Bill said, only half serious, now, and then, no longer pretending, turned to her with catching laughter to say, "You've got a pretty head full of stars."

She knew that he did not understand. Or, more accurately, perhaps, he heard the words, understood the meaning, but did not feel as she felt the essential rightness and truth of them. But he did sympathize with her; he did not laugh coldly, but in friendship, and that made everything quite all right.

During the summer before her senior year, Bill went East to see his mother, who was divorced and lived in New York City, and, when Bettyann saw him again in early autumn, he was old and wise with travel, and deliciously she knew that she had been waiting for him.

The final year of high school opened, and together she and Bill went to the movies and walked the quiet streets and drank Cokes in Gray-Reynold's Drugstore and laughed between classes. And his lean face was handsome.

But that he was soon to be drafted cast a net of dizzying uncertainty around their every handclasp and knit them together even as it promised to shear them apart. She wished desperately that this fact of divorcement might suddenly vanish. She wished—what nonsense she knew, even in the dream of it—that she might some way serve in his stead: or that a quick illness would come and pass and leave him with her to nurse back to health. Her other daydreams were quiet and contented and vaguely maternal; and surely, she thought, in close living, day to day, he will come to understand me as I must be understood.

Then, as spring came again and his draft date drew nearer,

their lives became more desperate and frantic until, one evening, she knew with sudden insight that her dream was splintering. His eyes were distant and angry and she was hurt and she reached out desperately after him, making, in memory, a perfect little idiot of herself and pushing him even further from her. Finally, to her shame, she cried bitterly and unfairly, "You've got to have a woman with *two* arms, haven't you?" and the dream lay at her feet, ruined forever, and even in the instant, the hot instant of the words, she knew that, for the first time, she had used her handicap to try to win advantage and that she could never again make that same mistake. And after he had gone, she remained weeping on the porch swing in hurt repentance, and mortification.

Sadness came in; she could never be happy again; resigned, never happy. As she sat in the darkness, staring out at the stars, she felt wave after wave of longing.

The world around her, silent, was quietly sad, and the air was quietly sad, and the leaves dripped quiet sadness; and life, too, was sad.

The first week afterward was endless: in her mind, a sad, blue tune, low, minor, coloring her movements and humming behind her ordinary conversations.

Two weeks later still, three weeks to the day since Bill had left, left although daily she saw his faraway face in school, Dave called her into the living room and said without preamble: "How would you like to go to Smith next year?" She was stunned for a moment, and Dave explained that Lee Stemy, an alumna of Smith, herself, had been looking forward for the last several years to getting her a scholarship; and in view of her remarkable high school record and Miss Stemy's influence the scholarship was practically assured.

Bettyann's first thought was for Dave and Jane, and she tried stumbly to argue that it would be unfair, after doing so much for her already, for them to give her the money for a school in the East; but Dave insisted quietly that she should go, and eventually when Jane said, "We've saved a little here and there for you to go to college on," she agreed, conditional upon the scholarship and she felt proud and excited and

happy, and it was fully fifteen minutes before she remembered that the world was a sad place.

Riding down on the train from Kansas City (she had flown there from Boston), a slow milk train that seemed to stop at every farm, Bettyann tried without success to sleep; and staring out the window, finally resigned to wakefulness, she slowly became aware of the extent to which less than one semester at Smith had changed the familiar countryside for her. When the train shrieked into a tiny depot, she could not help but notice the sense of isolation, the deadness, and the insularity of the station house and the somnolent main street.

Behind her in the East lay a different world. It was too new yet to be understood; but it was rich with promise like the sunrise. She caught glimpses of far horizons. New ideas from all directions, upon all subjects, were like keys unlocking doors to unexplored but exciting rooms, leaving her small and frustrated.

Her deeply hidden, latent talents were stirring under the impact. The promise of maturity was within her. Excitement trembled at her: at her fingertips lay an answer, and she could almost, but not quite, trace its outlines.

What am I to do with, how am I to fit into, this sad-funny world? What must I understand in order to be understood: and beyond that, in understanding, what then must I do? I wish I knew; I wish I knew.

And it was almost there on her mind's edge, almost, the answer. For one moment of utter loneliness (beyond the creeping train lay even, snow-splotched fields) she wanted most of all—as if that *were* the answer—to be completely understood. But that, she thought, would require complete identity; no, it is not that; the only one who can ever understand me completely is myself.

How can I fit into this sad-funny life: what is my role: what best can I do? The answer would be complex, as many-sided as life seemed, itself, to be, without easy definition. But this she knew, that she would be required to give unto them, the people, yes, of which she was a part and not a part, of her best



talent so that, in return, they would give unto her that which she most needed. What did they want from her; what did she want from them? (I wish I knew; I wish I knew.)

And role, even that, was not enough. Beyond there was something more; perhaps some obscure branch of philosophy that she had never heard of dealt with that. Unless it was all on a purely local level, and need, where life and death seem senseless but through compulsive repetition gain meaning, need was the whole foundation: from complexity, vitality; from vitality, complex need: when the need dies, so, too, life: sleep, quiet, boredom, death. Role might be all. Could it be, she wondered, that beyond the role, I am always to seek because I have to, never to find because I cannot?

The answer, the lesser answer, trembled on her mind's edge, how can I fit into this sad-funny world? Not yet.

Someday, someday, someday, clicked the wheels.

And soon, sounded the whistle, soon.

Dave met her at the station, helped her from the coach, took her single bag. The air was crisp and wintry as they walked across the gravel, upon which snow had perished, to the waiting car.

Dave was silent after the greetings, and in sudden terror, feeling the strangeness between them, Bettyann cried, "There's something wrong!"

Helping her into the car, Dave said, "What makes you say that?"

"You're so . . ." She paused, seeking a word that expressed her conviction; seeking to name, for herself as well as for him, the quality from which the conviction sprang. A twitch of his mouth; the inflection of his greeting; the reservation she thought she saw behind his eyes? Not these; not entirely. It was as if she had heard, at the first moment, his secret thought, and now she could not remember it. In sudden panic she said, "Is Mom all right? Has something happened to her?"

Dave said, "Of course she's all right." He closed her door and came around the front of the car to the driver's side, and, getting in, said, "They've been giving you enough to eat? You

certainly look healthy, but, I mean, you're getting *enough*?"

She laughed. "All I want."

"I went to the State University, you know. I was afraid in a private school maybe you wouldn't get enough. But it's good to see you. You look all right . . . It's nice having you back."

"I was a little homesick," Bettyann admitted.

"How long do you have?" He set the cold motor snarling.

"Ten days."

"That doesn't seem very long. But you really like school? And what's it like to go to a big Eastern college? How are the other girls; do you have any trouble getting along with them? And . . ."

"Goodness! Not so fast! I've got ten days, Dad. If I tell you about everything now, I won't have anything to talk about tomorrow. Tomorrow I'll just have to be like some stick-in-the-mud of a farmer: 'Well, mighty cold today; looks like more snow: guess maybe the cold snap'll be pretty hard on the winter wheat.'"

The car made a U-turn away from the station.

She snuggled into the seat. "It's very exciting," she said. "It's different, too, than I imagined it." She paused to get her general impressions of Smith into words, and the silence, almost immediately, was uncomfortable. Puzzled by the feeling, she glanced out the window and said, "The courthouse looks cleaner."

"Didn't Jane write about that? They sand-blasted it last September. Just after you left."

"No . . . She must have forgotten . . . And what happened to Starke's Hardware Store? Isn't that a new front?"

"He sold the store . . . They had a fire in the South End of town last month. It burned down the Castle place."

"Mom wrote about the fire."

Dave turned right on Fifth toward Garrison.

She looked at him again. She tried to determine how to break through the hidden barrier newly between them. To forestall silence she said, "It seems smaller. The town. More compressed . . . The houses aren't like New England houses. New England houses are all so old. They've been lived in so

long that some of the aliveness has worn off on them. Our houses aren't like that."

Then to avoid giving the impression that because of three months in the East she was beginning to feel superior to the town, she said quickly, "But I guess, if you go out West, they're different out there, too. From pictures I've seen, you get an impression of isolated hostility . . ." She bit her lip in annoyance, for the words seemed to increase rather than reduce the impression she had sought to dispel. She fell silent.

He drove to Maple; there he turned left.

The sense that something was wrong made Bettyann feel unsure of herself. She was half afraid to speak again for fear that the words would worsen the unknown difficulty.

"Is it something I've done or haven't done?" she said.

"What, honey? Haven't done what?"

"I *know* something's bothering you. I can feel it. Is it something I've done? Is it costing you too much money to keep me in school? If it's that . . ."

"It's nothing. It's . . ." Dave puffed his cheeks, a sign, Bettyann knew, that he was angry with himself. "All right," he said lamely. "Ever since you were so high you could see right through me, I guess . . . I promised Jane I wouldn't tell you."

"Oh, Lord!" she said. "I'm sure it's nothing so very solemn. I can't imagine anything that has to be kept a deep dark secret."

He seemed more relaxed now that the barrier was down. "It's probably not solemn at all. Jane just didn't want to tell you until you were ready to go back . . . There was a man here to see you. He was from Boston or some place back East. Jane was afraid he might spoil your Christmas; and she's looked forward to it so much. So she asked him if he'd mind waiting until you went back to Smith and see you there . . ." Dave had bounced the car up the driveway into the front yard. He cut the motor.

Bettyann was puzzled and excited too. She could not quite understand the excitement. "What did he want?" she asked, and her voice surprisingly was tense.

"I'll get your bag," Dave said. "Don't mention what I told

you. I'd better tell Jane first. He wanted to tell you—he had some information about—it was something about your . . . real parents. He didn't tell us very much."

Bettyann's heart was pounding.

"Don't say anything about it to Jane until I talk to her," Dave said.

And then Bettyann was running toward the porch where Jane was waiting. Jane caught her, laughing, and she cried, "It's wonderful to be home, Mom!"

He came two days after she returned to Smith. She had been waiting with mounting suspense, and, when the house mother knocked on the door to say, "Bettyann? There's a young gentleman downstairs to see you. His name is Don Talley," she felt her heart jump violently.

"Don . . . Talley," she said slowly, letting the strange name melt into her mind. She did not like the name exactly. It was not the sort of name she had expected, and she wondered what face would go with it. "All right, Mrs. Reeves. Tell him I'll be right down."

As the house mother's footsteps sounded on the stairs, her roommate said, "Amherst?"

Bettyann shook her head uncertainly.

"Aggies? Williams?"

"I . . . don't think so."

"Well," the roommate said, disappointment in her voice. "Is he at least handsome?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

The roommate drew in her chin with amazement. "My God, you can't even tell whether he's *cute* or not?"

". . . I've never seen him before."

"And he's never seen you?" The roommate considered Bettyann's headshake. She blinked her eyes. "Now that I call real sex appeal: You've *got* it."

Bettyann smiled thinly.

"Gee, I wish . . . Well, don't stand there. Go on down. Don't keep him waiting. Don't give the others a chance at him."

"I'm . . . going," Bettyann said.

"And you might ask him if he's got a friend who goes to Amherst or . . . Why, you're *whitel*! What's wrong? Are you scared?"

"No . . . Well, maybe I am, too, in a way."

"Are you in some kind of trouble? Can I help, Bettyann? Is there anything I can do?"

"I'm not in trouble . . . I guess I better go on down."

She left the room, and the door closed softly behind her. She walked down the wide stairs.

The crystal chandelier was tinkling musically. It had been moved by the wind when the huge, white door to the porch was last opened.

Bettyann stopped at the bottom of the stairs.

"He's the young gentleman talking to Mildred," Mrs. Reeves said when she saw Bettyann staring around the room. "He looks like a very nice young man."

"Yes," Bettyann said. "Thank you."

Bettyann crossed the room to where he was seated before the fireplace. Across the table from him, the brown-eyed Mildred was smiling with studied interest. Her hands lay quietly submissive in her lap; her lips were half parted.

When Bettyann reached his side he stood up and she felt a wave of uncanny recognition cross her mind. It seemed to come from outside herself.

"I'm Bettyann, Mr. Talley," she said.

"Bettyann . . . ah . . . Seldon?"

". . . Yes . . ."

Mildred leaned forward, her eyes aggressive. "Won't you join us? Don was just telling me he's from out West."

The fire threw a ruddy glare over his face. The face was still sharp from the cold outside; it was classically handsome, self-reliant, calm. Snowflakes glistened on his overcoat.

"Oh, Don, Don," Mildred said, standing and coming to his elbow. "Here," she said possessively, "let me take your overcoat, Don."

"No . . . Please . . . Don't bother . . ."

"I don't want you to think our house isn't hospitable. Let

me help you off with it." She fluttered at his collar. "I want you to feel perfectly at home here."

"Really, thank you, no," he said with a trace of annoyance in his voice.

"But . . ."

"I prefer to leave it on."

Bettyann looked at Mildred's suddenly lax face; childhood, sad childhood, perhaps, gleamed through on it for an instant, and then Mildred recovered her brittle defense and trying to keep injury from her voice, she said flippantly, "I—oh— Oh, well. I can see you two want to talk."

"If you don't mind," Don said.

"Not at all," Mildred said pleasantly and distantly. After a moment she said, "I have a damned test in Lit tomorrow and I have to be studying in a minute anyway."

When she was gone Don said, "She came over and sat down in front of me and started to play solitaire on this table. When I didn't say anything she looked up and said, 'I major in sociology.' When I didn't say anything, she said, 'When I graduate I'm going down to New York and hang out a red light and do firsthand research. Where do you come from?' So I told her I come from the West. She got my name from that woman over there I think."

Bettyann said gravely, and her eyes were puzzled, "I thought you told my parents you came from somewhere around here."

He nodded at the fire. "It was convenient to say that." He turned to her. "Can you leave this building now?"

"I—I could, I guess, if I wanted to." For the first time she noticed that he had an accent; it was not heavy, scarcely noticeable, and she could not remember having ever heard one quite like it before.

"I want you to get your coat. I want you to come with me."

The curtness of the statements made her want to answer an abrupt "No." But she held the refusal for there was something in his face—some indefinable tension—some almost sadness: some quality that drew her sympathy and excused his rudeness.

"Look at me," he said. "I have some things I must tell you about yourself. Look at me. Will you come?"

She looked into his eyes. She felt her heart flutter at the expression there. "I'll come." She reached out and touched his hand. "About my parents?"

"And about other things. Bettyann, I have a great deal to tell you."

"I'll get my coat."

"Please do."

He was waiting at the door when she came back downstairs.

Mrs. Reeves nodded to her and said maternally, "Don't forget, dear. Eleven o'clock."

Wordlessly, Don opened the door, and the two of them stepped out from the bright warmth into the dark cold.

"Where are we going?"

"To the Draper."

Her feelings toward him were confused. She did not altogether like him; she felt that she should not trust him as fully as she seemed inclined to. And yet, beyond that, she felt a kinship with him that she could not define. ". . . they won't let me go up to any of the rooms," she said.

"Walk by the desk naturally. It will be all right."

She thrust her face into the snow. She should, perhaps, be afraid, but she was not. Or perhaps she was afraid—not of him but that he might tell her things she did not want to know about herself. They walked past the chapel. (Snow creaked under their feet.) They left the white campus. They turned onto the main street, and downtown Northampton lay before them.

Her teeth chattered, and she held onto his arm.

Neon lights made the drifting snow soft orange, and their breath was frosty, and they heard laughter from a bar. They walked on. The town was readying for sleep.

At the Draper they stamped their feet free of clinging snow.

"Come. They won't notice you."

They walked up the outer steps, past the desk, and the drowsy clerk stared through her without interest, as if she

were not there at all, and she looked at Don whose face was relaxed.

Group voices, singing, drifted up from the Pilgrim's Room below. A girl laughed.

They walked up the worn carpet of stairs leading from the lobby to the second floor. Don led the way to the room. He tapped lightly on the door. "Don," he said.

"Come in."

He opened the door and let Bettyann enter before him. He closed the door.

"Sit down, Bettyann," said the man on the bed. His face was old and lined and his eyes were deepset and his lips were thin and his hair was white.

She studied his face. "Why—why," she said in wonder. "You're not old!"

The man on the bed nodded.

"She's one of us," he said.

"You may call me Robin," the man on the bed said. "I'm going to tell you some very strange things, Bettyann."

Bettyann's eyes were wide.

"Don't be afraid."

Although her heart was beating wildly she said, "I'm not . . . afraid." And she wondered if that were strictly true.

Robin said, "Will you close your eyes, my dear?"

And his voice, like Don's, was a foreign voice; and beyond that, more than his voice was foreign. His face, everything about him, unreal. She could not pinpoint the unreality any more than she could explain how she knew that he was not old, any more than she could explain the feeling of kinship with him. She closed her eyes. Her lips moved silently. She stood upon the brink of something completely beyond all her experience. She waited.

"Listen carefully," Robin said. "Do you hear my thoughts?"

After a moment she breathed a tired sigh. "Yes." Inside her mind, not a part of it—terrifyingly, an intrusion upon it—she could feel words form and dissolve. They were indistinct and



scattered, and beyond them there was an awareness of his presence. She felt revulsion, and she tried to fight against the words, but they continued, and then, after a moment, the revulsion passed.

"It is difficult to project this language. The symbols are too . . . heavy; not heavy, but . . . There's no word for it, here: *oxu*, in Fbun. You will see. You will learn many languages. Relax, my dear. I want to show you something more. Are you relaxed?"

"Yes," she said, but her body was tense.

"Try to follow this if you can. It may be difficult at first so you must help me."

It was not words inside her mind, now, although she was aware of his presence. He was trying to guide her own thoughts. She put her hand to her forehead. He was making her . . . Her thoughts were . . . tugging . . . at a closed compartment, a new part of her mind, so strange a part that she tried to draw away from it, but he insisted . . .

"You must help," he said.

She moaned, finally, when she felt a sensation that was entirely different from any she had felt before: something like an electric shock, something like a fresh breeze, something like remembered pain.

"It's . . . It's . . . growing! I can feel it growing!" she cried.

She opened her eyes and looked at her left arm. She turned the hand over and over, holding it before her face. She felt of it uncertainly. "It's new," she said. "My arm is new." She turned her eyes, pleading, toward Robin. She wanted to cry; she felt tears well toward her eyes, and, with effort she blinked them back. Her skin prickled. "*Who are you?*"

Some part of her mind insisted, querulously, that this could not be happening. (Most real of all were the walls of the room: splotched wallpaper was so very stolid and prosaic that it shrieked refutation, but its presence insisted reality.) And the fingers of her new left hand, slim, delicate fingers, flexed in impossible freedom.

Robin stood and walked to the window. "You'll have to learn," he said. "Show her, Don."

Again she looked at Don. Instantly she felt her vague dislike dissolve into awe. She wanted to look away, to tremble, to, to . . . but she stood mute before him, unbelieving, overpowered, and her feelings, her thoughts, her whole body, was suspended in dull wonder. Slowly, before her eyes, he shimmered and changed. And after a moment he was not human.

"Oh!" she said, and her voice was weak and small.

"That's what we're like," Robin said. "That's what you're like, Bettyann."

"I'm like that?" she said. Don—what had been Don—was strange, compelling, not beautiful, but attractive in strangeness. She shuddered, scarcely able to think; to imagine that she, too, was like that was not to be believed, not in the moment, and belief and disbelief did not exist: merely wonder, mute.

"You'll get used to it," Robin said. "You will learn to take many shapes, to be, if you wish, as you are now; to be, if you prefer, something else: a bird, perhaps, an animal, or things with which you are not yet familiar. Once you learn you may take many forms."

She looked down at the new arm. Almost afraid to try to think, she let her mind explore the new compartment of its own accord. What happened seemed automatic reflex. Slowly the arm shrunk to its original, withered shape. "Like that?" she said dully. "Like that?"

"You'll learn, Bettyann," Robin said.

Her heart seemed ready to burst. The very real—the oh, so real—walls of the room blurred, and the pattern of the wallpaper ran together, making her head ache with dry excitement. She expected them to crumble and resolve, the walls, into flowing, rippling lines that would merge away in all directions leaving her alone on a little island of solid carpet surrounded by moving silence. "Where are you from?"

"The stars."

". . . the . . . stars . . ." she said. Odd words. She had seen stars at night. They were very far away (but sometimes they seemed farther away than at other times). Tensions were building up inside of her body. The stars. It would be very

difficult to control the tensions, and she was going to be whipped back and forth in her mind, thoughts pulling this way and then that way, for some time. (Eventually, her mind would quiet: she could sense that, but it was meaningless for now there was no quiet.) It would take time. For the stars were very far away.

"We are not from this planet. Surely, you, yourself, Bettyann, must have felt that you did not . . . entirely belong to this planet. Surely you must have seen that you were different from the rest."

She shook her head, feeling the curls move, and one dropped over her forehead, and she brushed it away. Different? Different? "Tell . . . tell me about it," she said. Tell me very slowly, she wanted to say, a little bit at a time, for I do not fully believe you, yet, and I would not like to hear more that I cannot believe, except slowly, so I can fit in pieces (like in a jigsaw puzzle). I remember a jigsaw Jane and I worked: it was a picture of two dogs, bird dogs, and we had lost the box top, and it was a very long time before we could imagine what the picture was about. (Jane at first thought it was a behemoth, and I thought it was a grizzly bear.)

"There's a great deal to tell," Robin said.

Bettyann thought of the bird dogs, and, when Dave came home, he laughed and said, "Sure. It was on the box top." (And then she and Jane remembered, of course, and they said they'd really known it all along, now that he reminded them.) It seemed, suddenly, as if she had known forever: that here, finally, here were her people, people who could understand her as no one else had ever understood her, and she wanted to cry out with happiness, and then, not with happiness, but just surprise.

"We travel," Robin said. ". . . originally we came from a world that I suppose may have been much like this one. Our records show it was called Amio. We were already travelers when the race on this planet was still in its caves. It has been so long that our own planet is lost beyond the expanding horizon, perhaps twirls around a dead sun: I do not know.

It has been very long. Our history . . . much of it . . . is forgotten. Who knows but perhaps all races pass through the same stages, and we may have been once like these new people among whom you have lived? But we travel now. We grew old . . . and wise on Amio, and after a long time, somehow, one of us discovered the *zeiui* effect, and we traveled far from Amio. And now we find a sunset here and the blue of waters a million-million miles away . . .”

As she listened the unshocked part of her mind realized that he was old, but not old in the sense she had used the word before, not as Earthmen are old; and it almost seemed as if his words were weary with age. The thought fluttered and died.

“When we came last to this planet,” Robin said, “your parents were killed in an accident. I, myself, heard your father’s thoughts just before he died for I was waiting in a scout ship for him. I thought that you, too, were dead . . . We returned a month ago. One of us thought he felt your presence on the planet. I was able to remember where the accident occurred; we computed the date from the Big Ship’s log; we checked the files of a newspaper in the town nearest the accident. We found, indeed, that you had survived. From that, discreet inquiry led us to you.”

“ . . . go on . . . ”

“There are not many of us any more; not as many as we might prefer. It would be nice to have a new face again among us. There is ample room for you. And we have come for you, for you are one of us; we could not leave you here, lonely. We have come to ask you to come back to your own people, to travel with us. For you are one of us.” He turned to stare out the window into the falling snow. “Many planets have more beautiful snow,” he said.

“There are better snows on Lylo,” Don said. “And better shadows, too. There are three moons there.”

Bettyann knew they were giving her time to let the information settle into her mind. But it insisted on floating free, unmoored.

“This planet is famous for its greens,” Robin said, more to

himself than to Bettyann or Don. "There are some really startling greens in the tropical foliage, particularly Guam, for instance. But not here, not at this season, only this snow . . ."

"These are not your people," Don said from the alien body.

Bettyann looked at him again. The form began already to lose some of its compelling strangeness. She was coming to accept it. And now familiarly her emotions went out to it, and she longed to assure herself of its reality and the reality of her own true body beneath the Earth flesh.

"Let me help you," Don said.

Trembling, Bettyann began to change. She reached back along unfamiliar paths toward the new compartment of her mind. Utter complexity there: a twisted skein of controls. Again unrealized patterns swirled her thoughts; and like birds southward in winter, the thoughts knew direction from instinct. It was slow and painful at first, and she bit her lip to keep from crying out. And then, as she felt her body move upon itself, she was stunned by the miracle, wonderful beyond belief, that vibrated on the edge of existence. Her thoughts were too overcome for understanding: there was only a sense of awe, of humbleness, that here, within herself, she bore the great secret that could unlock the matter of her body and change it and release it and fashion it and mold it. She knew the new shape; she knew its lines; she knew its outward form: it was there in the compartment; and the compartment was not a second mind, not a greater mind at all, but something distinct from that, something apart from her personality, and wonderfully, wonderfully subservient to her thoughts. The transformation continued, with increasing speed, with increasing ease. And yet, she had never seen before; could hardly believe now, and they had shown her. It was too . . . alien.

It will take time, she thought, for the strangeness to leave. At first, so strange, and then, so new, and then (time is a wonderful thing) so natural after all. (And Dave had said, "If you walk over a path long enough, they'll pave it.")

"No," she said, her mind still quivering with the shock of the change and with the new (but not yet certain) freedom

of her new form. "No," she said dully. There was the sense of belongingness: the absolute certainty of it, beyond everything, beyond feelings, thoughts: she belonged; it was right. "No," she said again. "They are not my people." She looked down to see how awkwardly her Earth clothing draped on the alien body, and she tugged at the dress, and, for a moment, she felt sad and isolated.

"Then you will come with us?"

She started to say, "Yes. Yes, I will go. I must go, mustn't I? You are my people." But all the impressions, all the jumbled-together memories out of the past rose within her, moaning. She tried to squeeze them away, tried to forget the now re-experienced excitement she had felt but two weeks ago at knowing she stood upon the brink of discovery (even now, still stood: still on the brink). My people are from the stars, she thought, unbelieving. And they go where they will, free and unbound. (And I told Doris I'd give her my history notes tomorrow, and I had an idea for an *Outlook* article.) She waited for her emotions to quiet.

"Give me a minute," she said. Emotions bubbled, frightfully out of control, and moved upward in her like furious hot water toward the top of a pan. (She stood feeling the strange body and watching Robin at the window staring into the snowfall.)

She had, once, a nightmare that her room was gone; above the stairs, at home, was nothingness; and when she awakened, moonlight fell on the carpet, and there were Momma Jane's soft hands, hands that had been there, quieting, as long as she could remember and before she could remember. And downstairs there were lacy curtains and nine (she had counted them often) twelve-inch albums of music that Dave, sometimes, after supper, listened to, and some day she would put the music into a painting, along with how Dave felt and how she felt (and there was a new compartment in her mind that would help her mold paints to her will and show her many things to be done and to be shown). And there was once a family of mockingbirds nesting in the withered oak tree: in summer, they sang all night, and through the open

windows she could listen until sleep came. She could taste the night summer air (with sweet hyacinth and mystic lily of the valley and polleny honeysuckle and spicy rose). And it was neither happy nor sad, the memory that came, wrapping up everything in a flash of the five senses colored by time, but strangely wonderful, and she remembered with quiet amazement until her blood tingled.

Don shuffled restlessly.

Watching the stars, ever so far away, sometime before she entered school—very early, one of her first memories which merged into warm, assuring, nonmemories of the impalpable before . . . They were hard and bright and intensely inviting, and she wanted to gather them like flowers. (Wasn't there a children's story about a little girl who wanted the moon, and one day she was gone, and her Daddy, pointing, said: "She's up there, she rowed away on a moonbeam," and the townspeople all shook their heads because it was sad?)

(Old man Starke was dying of cancer.)

But looking at Robin, old/young Robin, so very wise, she felt vast longing, longing more than Earth longing, and the stars were spread out in a thousand excitements at her fingertips, and the wonder of it, vast, eternally vast, overcame her. (A blazing sun to play with, and spin beyond, and a dead sun to make you ask never-to-be-answered questions; and a thousand planets, and blue water, and sound and movement, and love of space; and never understanding, until a comet comes from nowhere, and it makes you know, and know, forget, and try to remember again . . . later . . . in a quiet time.) She wanted to fall down on her knees before the thought and throw out her no longer arms in a gesture of gratitude for these, her people, and she wanted to cry: These are my people, and this strange body is my body, and these are the ones who will understand me because they are what I am. These are my people, and the sad-funny people and the world I have known, merely . . . human . . . These, my people, and her blood raced with excitement, and she said, "Yes. Yes. I'll go. You are my people."

The words were said. And now she wanted to cry.

Robin was at her side. She looked up, and her heart raced with hope. "I've got to tell my parents good-by first," she said. "I've got to tell them. I couldn't leave without telling them."

"I am sorry," Robin said after a moment. "I think I can imagine how you must feel. But that is impossible. To permit that would be to risk exposure. We ask only to be let alone; in return we let others alone. We waited for you here when your parents . . . seemed to want to question us. We did not want any trouble."

"But I just can't leave! I've got to see them again! I've got to tell them I'm going away!"

"The others will be waiting now," Don said. "We have delayed departure for you. We cannot wait any longer."

"You must write your good-by," Robin said.

"Please . . ." she said.

Robin shook his head. "It is the rule, Bettyann. It has always been the rule. If this race were to discover our visits, if your parents found out . . . No, the risk is too great. I cannot answer to the others. We ask only to be let alone; that is not too much to ask."

Slowly she changed back to the form of a college girl with a withered left arm, withered because it was more comfortable than the whole one which she would scarcely know how to use. (And she wondered idly with part of her mind, what would Bill say to see me with two arms, and where is Bill now—in the army somewhere—and does his handsome face, or the meaning of it, the memory of it, the . . . does it really matter what he would say or think? I could let the arm grow, a little at a time, a fraction of an inch a day, and get used to it, and tell everyone that some kind of exercise was making it grow again, and in a year when it was whole they would not think it strange, nor I. And I'm being a child to cry.)

"I'd . . . I'd like to be alone," she said. "I'll be all right after a bit. Please leave me alone for a few minutes."

"There is a pen and stationery on the desk," Don said.



When they came back, Robin said, "Do you feel better now?"

And she said, ". . . Yes . . . I have written a letter to the college telling them that I have been called home by illness. They will not contact my parents and worry them about my absence." She looked at Don. "I wrote my parents a letter telling them I must go away." She looked at Robin, appealing for understanding. "It wasn't easy to write."

Robin said, "I am very sorry, believe me. But perhaps a letter will be best for you. I'll give them to the man at the desk downstairs."

Don said, "We'd better go."

"We have a car outside," Robin explained. "We have a scout ship several hours away."

They left the room, and, in the lobby, Robin roused the sleepy clerk and said, giving him the two letters and a bill, "Will you mail these first thing in the morning?"

(And Bettyann thought: It will take three days, maybe four days, for Jane to get it, and she will take it from the mailbox . . . and she will stand by the mailbox, perhaps open the letter before going back inside—if it isn't too cold on the porch that day. Open it by tearing neatly the right-hand edge, and shake out—or perhaps reach inside with thumb and forefinger after—the single page and the large-scrawled and few, pathetically few, words.)

They were in the car, and they drove through the cold night, and Bettyann trembled, sitting between Robin (driving) and Don, until finally noticing, Robin said, "Better turn on the heater, Don."

Robin drove slowly, and the night was long. Don dozed fitfully beside the window. At first Bettyann knew rising excitement that she could scarcely contain—not unmixed with sorrow but stronger. After a while she turned to Robin to ask him to hurry, and then suddenly desperate, she wanted to talk to overcome the sickness of parting, but she could not find the words. Finally, her mind grew weary, and she wanted to sleep and forget (or perhaps dream a moment of flashing stars).

Night was endless. And then false dawn, gray and angry with snow clouds. And then the faint pink of real dawn, making her mouth feel dry and her head feel heavy.

Don roused, and after a while he consulted a map. "Turn right. The next road."

Slowly the world around them—flowing past them—awakened. They skirted a town.

". . . there's an odd red," Don said. "On that boy's cap, Robin."

Bettyann stared eagerly through the window. The boy, pumping his bicycle, his breath steam, sailed a newspaper away in an arching curve to a porch, and Bettyann remembered how it was to hear the thump of a morning paper against the side of the house, when you were still half asleep, and it was winter outside.

Suddenly fully awake, Don said, "They don't see much, do they? Were you able to show them anything?"

". . . a little," Bettyann said.

"Their eyes are different from ours, I think. It must have been difficult," Don said.

Still looking out the window, she wanted to explain something of how she felt. "Old man Starke sold his hardware store and put all his affairs in order because the doctor told him he had cancer and was going to die before summer."

Don smiled distantly. "You can tell us very much about the natives. Believe me, I'm sure we shall all enjoy listening to your experiences."

There was not indifference in his voice; indifference was too easy a word for it. It was as if he were agreeing politely to something he did not quite understand; or as if he thought a great fuss were being made over a trifle. But he did not know old man Starke, did not know that old man Starke kept candy suckers behind the counter to give to children when their parents made purchases. (To be sure, it was good business: but there was more than good business in his smile, and the candy was something more than good business, too: it was more complex than good business.) And she could remember the smile and the voice (where was the cancer? in the throat?)

saying, "My, how she's grown, Mr. Seldon, and I think I have just the thing for her sweet tooth today." (Always as if this generosity were not his usual practice, but something highly special just for you.) And on that occasion, he waved the not-yet-wrapped paintbrush (Daddy Dave bought it to paint the sink drainboard with, and then reconsidering called in Mr. Olson to do the job instead), and the hardware store smell of oil and new iron, or how new iron *should* smell. But that was something Don could not know. And never having experienced, might not feel as she felt . . .

"Turn here," Don said. "We go straight ahead."

The houses began to fall away to be replaced by fields. The rocky ground seemed to protest cultivation. Everything was dead, and rich dirt showed through rifts in the snow. The air was crisp, and the sun was hard and bright.

The car purred on. A railway line circled in to parallel the road, and a train puffed at the grade. The train fell behind the car, and after a bit, Bettyann heard it whistle sadly for a crossing.

"Tell me about the planets," Bettyann said. "Tell me what I'm going to see."

"There's so much . . ."

"I'd like to paint. What can I paint?"

"Paint? Well, there's Olike. It's a really beautiful blue lake."

"I'd like to paint something like that field there, I think," Bettyann said.

"But isn't it a bit colorless, don't you think?" Don said, and there was honest surprise in his voice, as if it had never occurred to him to paint a field.

"I guess you've seen so many things . . . Yes, I guess it is. But don't you see how, in spite of all the rocks and the snow, how everything is all huddled up, waiting to come alive?"

Robin said helpfully, "Yes, that's a fact, all right."

And Don said, "Left, here."

They drove for several miles in silence. They came to a rambling, high-sided bridge over an icebound creek (the ice above the center current was no thicker than scum). The boards of the bridge rattled under the weight of the car.

Once across it, Robin swung the car onto a fisherman's path. The path was closely pressed by dead tree branches which clawed at the metal roof with brittle fingers.

"We won't need the car any more," Don said. "We can leave it here."

Robin jolted the car to a halt, and the three of them got out, and Robin said, "You were right, Don. No one's come by. It was a safe place."

The ship rested thirty or forty yards into the forest. There was a dead, charred area around it.

"Well, can you change now, all right, Bettyann?" Robin said.

"I think I can," Bettyann said. She let her form waver and change, and now it was easier, and suddenly compelled to exact their approval, she felt of the power in the compartment and began to work with it.

"A little tree!" Don cried happily. "A little tree, Robin! Look how pretty the leaves are! She's a very good tree!"

(The air was chill. The sun, bright through hazy clouds.)

"She learns quickly," Robin said.

She changed again, this time not into anything that she knew, but as her feelings guided her.

Don stared deep into the grayness that had been, a moment before, a tiny tree in bright, full foliage, and then he turned away shuddering. "That isn't very pretty, whatever it is," he said.

She let her body relax into her real form, the form into which she belonged, and for a single instant, she seemed too tightly held and oddly uncomfortable, and Earth words came difficultly from her new mouth, and she could not yet think to them, for she knew no language, and she realized that, on the long drive, they had been thinking in conversation beyond her. She said, "It was . . . sadness, I guess you'd say. How I feel about leaving."

"We'd better get in the ship now," Robin said.

And Don helped her up.

When they were in the air, looking down at the trees fall-

ing away and backward, Don said, "You must be very excited. You have a great deal to look forward to."

But her emotions, in the moment of severance, were too great to permit an answer. She stood quiet and the window fogged with low clouds. Already the forest was lost in swirling grayness. And the ship increased speed. She was caught and held by the cold metal walls, and she wanted to pound them futilely with her fists. Home was far away below, far away, and farther even as she thought, and farther still, and dwindling, dwindling, beyond her grasp.

"The Big Ship is not far off the coast of Mexico," Robin said. "We will be there soon."

Bettyann wanted to hold on to something, for she was sick with movement. It will pass, she told herself, it will pass. She thought of the stars, and of the body, her body, and the alien lips moved, and she thought: These are my people.

The ship rose. It turned slowly toward the West. And time passed, little or great, and the clouds lay behind them, the Great Lakes below, like fingers curled up from behind the horizon.

Then, after a while, new fields and new forests, new streams and wide plains (and a huge river gashing the red earth). And after that, shooting high, the young mountains with toothy sharp crags biting at storm clouds that were teasing their summits. And snow sparkled on the peaks.

The ship quivered with flight and sang good-by to the land far below. (And now the West Coast below, which she saw for the first time, would never see again, and dawn was upon it.)

"Tell me about the planets," she pleaded. "Tell me quickly."

"You'll be able to see for yourself shortly," Don said.

"But tell me a little. Right now. Please."

"Well, there are the orange mountains of Kenu."

"What are they like?" she asked intently, trying to hold all of her attention together on his words.

"You'd just have to see them. We usually spend a whole day there."

"A . . . day?"

"That's not too long for the orange mountains," Don said.

"No," Bettyann said. "I meant how could you really see everything in a day?"

"I don't quite understand," Don said.

"I should like to *know* the orange mountains. Are there any streams there?"

". . . I can't say about that. Are there, Robin?"

Robin, at the controls, cleared his throat. "I can't say that I've ever noticed."

"But the colors, don't you see, Bettyann," Don said. "The texture of the colors."

"That's right," Robin said. "The colors. That's the important thing . . ."

Below lay the ocean, a tortured wash of deep green and gray: and white foam bounced like mad-dog slaver. The water changed to crystal sparkles and blue, deep blue, lighter blue, and then blue that was flat and waiting. A tiny steamer threw morning smoke. And night lay just ahead, for the ship outpaced the sun.

"There's always a great deal to see," Don said suddenly. "There are many sights," and Bettyann walked toward the rear of the ship.

Don thought to Robin, "She is a strange one."

Robin peered down, and moonlight was upon the water. "There's the Big Ship," he said. He dipped the scout toward it. Ocean roared up. He steadied the scout under his hands.

"The landing port's open, I see," Don remarked.

Bettyann looked down at the silver ship below. It lay upon the waves and rolled gently with them, and the landing port gaped like a hungry mouth, and the ship was a sleek, waiting prison.

If she were home now, she could tell Dave and Jane she had gotten sick at Smith and that she'd borrowed the money from June and hurried home because she was afraid to be sick among strangers. And then, after the letter came, after she had destroyed it, she could say she was well again and go back to Smith. She'd miss a week or so, but they'd let her back in after saying what a silly goose she'd been for not re-

porting to the dispensary instead of carrying a stomach-ache, that *might* have been appendicitis, halfway across the continent. It would be easy to pretend to be sick because she knew of her body now and she could counterfeit any symptom.

And then she realized the wonderful thing she bore within herself. So far, in the few hours of knowledge, she had only scratched the surface. What secrets were there? How much did she know that doctors never suspected? That artists never imagined? That . . . ? She thought of old man Starke, and what was the strange, rampant growth inside *his* body?

*Did she know?*

She became vastly excited at the thought of what it might mean to uncover the secret of herself. And now, for the first time, dimly but with overpowering certainty, she looked forward toward tomorrow knowing what her job would be and what her role was, and she was trembling.

But it was too late.

Below lay ocean in all directions, cutting her off from escape, and she looked at Don and Robin and felt a great sadness for them and for herself, and in all directions, bridgeless, the ocean rolled away to far horizons.

And Robin settled the scout inside the mother ship and berthed it.

Don walked back to her. "Do not cry," he said. "We are here." He smiled. "Let's get out. We're in the Big Ship. You're really home. Ready to travel at last."

"We are?" she said.

They climbed out into the huge hangar.

"I'll check the chart room before I close the port," Robin said. "There may be another scout out."

Don bent to inspect a pitted place in the hull of the scout.

After a moment, Robin came back. "No. They're all in. I'll close the port."

"I'll tell Bettyann. She'll want to watch the take-off from the chart room."

Robin's feet pounded away. The port clanged shut. The feet came back. "What's wrong?"

"That's funny. She was here a moment ago. Bettyann! Oh, Bettyann! . . . I can't seem to find her . . . Bettyann!"

"I know she'll want to watch the take-off," Robin said.

"Bettyann!" Don called, his voice echoing away unanswered.

Puzzled, they looked at each other and shook their heads.

"Bettyann!" Don called, and, "Where the devil is she?" Robin said.

And outside the mother ship the moon was low and the sea rolled lazily like an exhausted lover and the stars were far away in jet. Above the gentle sea, a lone, great bird flapped its powerful wings against the night.



## R. Bretnor LITTLE ANTON

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*Readers of The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction should need no introduction to Papa Schimmelhorn, that lusty and, we fear, somewhat bawdy octogenarian who makes a new and wonderful appearance here. Little Anton, his adolescent relative from Switzerland, should not only prove to be as popular a creation as Schimmelhorn himself, but we suspect he may well start a rather dangerous vogue. Little Anton has strange psychological gifts and, by crossing his eyes, 'can "see around the corner," in the vernacular of this kind of mystical curiosa. Silk, nylon, and such are apparently not impenetrable to the gaze of those so gifted!*

*In one of the most amusing science-fiction stories we have ever read, Bretnor indulges in a delightful ribbing of a relatively new field of investigation, wherein both the United States and British navies are pleasantly taken apart and put together again by two of the most wonderful and outrageous characters in contemporary fiction.*

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THE DAY BEFORE Little Anton was due to arrive at Ellis Island the Board of Directors of the Luedesing Time and Instrument Corporation of New Haven met in special session to determine the fate of his great-uncle, Papa Schimmelhorn.

Through gold-rimmed spectacles, old Heinrich Luedesing glared at his son Woodrow, at the Board, and at Captain Perseus Otter, U.S.N. "I haff said vun thousand times," he

puffed, "und now I say again—*nefer* vill I fire Papa Schimmelhorn. He iss a chenius!"

"Now now, Dad," soothed Woodrow Luedesing, forcing his features into their second-best Dale Carnegie smile, "it's just that things have changed. Remember, we aren't simply the old Luedesing cuckoo clock factory any more. We've converted. We've retooled. New capital has come into the firm. We have a contract—the contract—to make those super-secret Wilen scanners for the Navy. It's stuff that takes high-powered scientific knowhow. It can't be handled by a cuckoo clock technology."

Obstinately, old Heinrich shook his head.

"Well, Dad." The smile, slipping out of gear, was instantly replaced by proper filial sympathy and sorrow. ". . . We didn't want to have to force the issue. But . . ." Woodrow shrugged, "; . . . you leave us no alternative. After the Captain gives us the Navy point of view, we'll have to call a vote."

Captain Perseus Otter rose, jutting sharply forward as he did so. This accentuated his amazing likeness to Lord Nelson—or rather to a figurehead of Nelson carved by some sculptor of strongly anti-British tendencies. It was an unfortunate singularity, cruelly noticed by a long succession of superior officers and by all the ladies who might have married him. It had turned him into a bitter man.

Captain Otter fixed old Heinrich with the sort of gaze usually reserved for derelicts which refuse to sink. "Mr. Luedesing," he snapped, "eight weeks ago, I approved your promotion of this man Schimmelhorn from foreman to superintendent of production. In my opinion, he was not qualified for the position. He is eighty years of age. He left school at eleven. His IQ is that of a high-grade moron. His moral character is reprehensible. However, I deferred to your judgment. Here, sir, are the results."

He removed two gadgets from his brief case. "As you are aware, the critical element in the Wilen scanner—the part which enables us to detect every ship and aircraft, friend or foe, within a thousand miles—is Assembly M. It is so secret

that none of us knows what it contains, so secret that it must be manufactured entirely by sealed automatic mechanisms. These machines were installed by Schimmelhorn. He alone has been told how they function. All *we* know," the Captain's voice quivered with righteous wrath, "is that Assembly M is supposed to come out in *one* piece instead of two—and *that there should be no clockwork in it!*"

The table buzzed. The gadgets passed from hand to hand—a seamless silver ovoid with six slender porcelain legs, and a toadstool-shaped vacuum tube full of odd bric-a-brac, in the center of which several brass gears were clearly visible.

"I shall summarize," declared Captain Otter. "*One*, the gears do not belong within the tube. *Two*, the tube belongs *inside* the unit, where it is now impossible to put it. *Three*, we shall have to bring Wilen himself down from M.I.T. to remedy the situation. And *four*—" As though an unattired mermaid had cut across his bows, he blushed. "—since Thursday, Mr. Luedesing, there have been twenty-eight complaints from female employees. Schimmelhorn is continually molesting them."

"Papa Schimmelhorn does not molest women," fumed old Heinrich. "He chust makes passes."

Captain Otter folded his arms. "I shall state the Navy's attitude simply and directly. Mr. Luedesing, *Schimmelhorn must go!*"

Immediately afterward, by a vote of eight to one, the members of the Board decided to retire Papa Schimmelhorn, complete with gold watch, pension, and signed testimonial. Then, at Woodrow Luedesing's suggestion, they sent for him to tell him the good news.

Papa Schimmelhorn was twice as big as Heinrich Luedesing. He was attired gloriously in hound's-tooth-check trousers, green plaid sports coat, and devastating orange shirt—and on his ruddy cheek, midway between his left eyebrow and his huge white beard, there was a smear of lipstick.

He seated himself casually on a corner of the table, and put an arm around old Heinrich's shoulders. "Always, Hein-

rich, with such nincompoops you shpend your time. Iss bedter you come with Papa Schimmelhorn, to see dot new blonde in der shipping office. I tell you—" he pointed at the Captain and favored the Directors with an enormous wink, "—she would make efen dot sailor come to lifel"

Captain Perseus Otter fizzed slightly, like something starting to go off. And Woodrow Luedesing, trying to assume a friendly but executive expression, stepped into the breach.

"We've been discussing you, Mr. Schimmelhorn," he purred. "We have been concerned about you—your advanced age, the strain of adjusting yourself to the swift pace of modern industry, the impact of new problems too complex for your simple skills. It is sad but true that sooner or later the torch of progress must be passed on by the failing hands of those who have so bravely carried it. The Luedesing Time and Instrument Corporation, Mr. Schimmelhorn, wants your few remaining years to be *happy* ones. As General Manager, I . . ."

There was a cheerful bellow from Papa Schimmelhorn. "Heinrich, such nonzense Voodrow talks! I tell you vot he needs," he raised a ham-like, and by no means failing, hand, "vun goot lesson on der backside. Dot iss enough!"

Woodrow Luedesing, paling slightly, scurried to shelter in Captain Otter's lee. Several directors quickly pushed chairs between themselves and Papa Schimmelhorn.

"*Nein*, Papa, *nein*." A tear splashed on old Heinrich's thick mustache. "It iss now too late. You do nodd vork here any more! You haff been retired, with a pension, und a gold vatch, und maybe a diploma."

"At *my* recommendation," put in Captain Perseus Otter loftily.

"*Ach*, zo?" Papa Schimmelhorn didn't seem the least bit stricken. "Heinrich, now ve undershtand. It iss because of Voodrow, who iss ashamed of cuckoo clocks. It iss alzo—" he looked the Captain up and down, "—because of *him*. He iss chealous because he cannodt get a girl like oder sailors!"

Two of the directors snickered, and Captain Otter began to fizz again. But old Heinrich was not comforted.

"I haff told them, Papa, that withoudt you der vorks break

down. I haff told them how you haff been a chanitor at der Geneva Institute of der Higher Physics, vhere you listen to der Herr Professors und become a chenius. But der Captain says der dingus iss all wrong . . .”

Chuckling, Papa Schimmelhorn turned his back on the directors. “You listen, Heinrich. I haff vun improfement made. From these dunderheads I keep it zecret. But, at der Institute, three veeks I miss because I meet a widow vith red hair, zo,” he tapped his skull. “Something iss nodt in here, und der inzide of der dingus iss shtill oudt. Don’t vorry, Heinrich, I vill fix. I vill see my friend Albert, in New Chersey. He vas a shmart boy in Schvitzerland—almost, like me, a chenius. Right after I bring Lidtle Anton I vill see him.”

From his pocket he took a tinted photograph, showing a plump, slightly cross-eyed infant peering knowingly at a buxom nurse. “Here iss Lidtle Anton,” he exclaimed proudly. “Eighteen pounds vhen he vas born! Und now they are ex-borting him from Schvitzerland to me und Mama, so he grows up to be a fine man, und nodt like Voodrow.”

He rose, bright blue eyes twinkling at the Board. “Don’t you be angry vith them, Heinrich. Soon they make a big mess—and then they beg me to come back, und everything iss fixed. Und then,” he slapped his mighty chest, “oh, ho-ho-ho! Maybe, if he is goot, I show dot sailor how to catch a girl!”

When Papa Schimmelhorn appeared at Ellis Island and asked for little Anton Fledermaus, the authorities concerned immediately abandoned a boatload of assorted immigrants to expedite his mission personally.

He noticed nothing unusual about this. Waiting, he flirted with a dark girl from Marrakech and congratulated himself on escaping beyond the reach of Mama Schimmelhorn’s steely eye and stiff black umbrella.

Largely on the strength of Little Anton’s photograph, he had equipped himself with a mechanical turtle, a gaudy lollipop, and a work involving a character named *Willie Wabbit*. Therefore he paid no heed when he saw two uniformed attendants gingerly urging forward an overgrown cherub who

had suddenly erupted into the most revolting stage of adolescence. This youth wore knickers and a jacket three sizes too tight for him, and carried no luggage except a toothbrush in his breast pocket. The attendants led him up to Papa Schimmelhorn, blurted, "He's all yours," and hastily withdrew.

Taking off his cap respectfully, the youth addressed Papa Schimmelhorn as "dear great-uncle." Then, in a voice alternating between a tortured treble and a bullfrog bass, he made a little speech in German, conveying the best wishes of numerous relatives and promising that he would be a good boy and do what he was told.

"LITTLE ANTON!" Papa Schimmelhorn released the girl from Marrakech. He embraced the youth exuberantly. He held him at arm's length for a pleased inspection. "Little Anton, *how you grow!*"

Little Anton retreated out of reach. "Boy-oh-boy!" he said. "Am I glad *that's* over."

"But—but you shpeak *English?*"

"Natch," growled Little Anton. "I see the gangster pitchers. That Dutch stuff I gave you was for effect."

"Oh, ho-ho-ho! To think I bring a lollipop und a toy turtle!" Papa Schimmelhorn was convulsed. "Der goot choke iss on me!"

Little Anton peered at the girl. For a moment, his eyes crossed. "Pop," he snickered, "it sure woulda been if I hadn't come along. Well, my stuff's due later—so kiss her good-bye and let's take in a burleycue."

These evidences of precocity delighted Papa Schimmelhorn. He pinched Miss Marrakech, who simpered prettily in Arabic. He took Little Anton fondly by the arm.

"Und now," he said, as they took leave of Ellis Island, "ve go to see my goot friend Albert in New Chersey. Dot must come first, before der burleycue. Und on der vay I tell you all aboutt America—"

At once, he told the story of Cheorge Vashington und der cherry tree—and this led him, naturally, into the subject of his own career. By the time they reached Penn Station—

where they paused to reclaim a worn carpetbag and a large shoe box from the checkroom—Little Anton had been made acquainted with the private lives of several festive ladies of Berne, New Haven, and points in between. By the time they reached Jersey, he had been briefed on the necessity for a united male front against Mama Schimmelhorn's domestic tyranny. And, before their train had been ten minutes under way, he had received technical information on the Wilen scanner, the bare, uncensored thought of which would have given Captain Perseus Otter a conniption fit.

He heard all this with half an ear. Occasionally, he rumbled an "uh-huh" or squeaked out a "no kiddin'?" Once, looking at his great-uncle in open admiration, he exclaimed, "Yuk-yuk! When I get to your age, Pop, I wanna be an old goat just like you." But he spent most of his time staring at fellow passengers, usually feminine ones, letting his eyes cross, and making such pithy comments as "woo-wool" or "phooey."

Finally, though, Papa Schimmelhorn tapped the shoe box resting on his knees, and said, "Zo, Liddle Anton, dot iss vhy I bring vun dingus only—because it iss zo zecret. It vill do eferything dot I haff told aboutt, alzo anoder trick vvhich iss a big surprise."

Little Anton's eyes widened. Focusing on the shoe box, they crossed slightly. "Yipel" he remarked. "You got it right here with you, huh?" Then, with evident pleasure, he jerked his thumb over his left shoulder. "Hey, I betcha that's why that little bastard in the corner's been tailing us!" he cried. "*I betcha he's a spy.*"

Papa Schimmelhorn was not just a genius. He was a genius with *savoir faire*. Turning calmly, he squinted at the undersized, sallow individual three seats behind them. Instantly he was amused. "*Dumkopf!*" he guffawed. "Chust because he follows, it does noddt mean der liddle bastard iss a shpy. Haff you noddt heard aboutt der FBI? Dot's vot he iss. It iss security."

"Nuts to you, Pop," retorted Little Anton loudly. "I seen G-men in pitchers. They don't look like what you catch in rat traps."

"*Ho-ho!*" Papa Schimmelhorn slapped his thigh; his merri-

ment resounded through the car. "Der FBI iss clefer, Lidle Anton. Dot iss a disguise!"

By now, all eyes were on them, and comments were being freely made on every hand. This seemed to embarrass the little man. For a few seconds he wiggled in his seat. Then, pulling his pork-pie hat down over his ears, he scuttled out and vanished.

After that, the tumult gradually subsided, and the other passengers, losing interest, went back to their newspapers and naps.

Papa Schimmelhorn patted Little Anton on the head. "You are a foolish boy," he told him. "When you are older iss time maybe to worry aboutd shpies. Iss bedter now you leaf it all to me."

"Foey," muttered Little Anton. "I guess you think you're the only genius in the family. Well, Pop, don't say I didn't tell you." And he withdrew into himself, to stare at his feet and pick moodily at an occasional pickle.

Papa Schimmelhorn did not chide him for his rudeness. Leaning his elbows on the seat ahead, he started to read the copy of *Newsweek* which its stout, spectacled occupant was holding. For several minutes, lips moving slowly, he scanned the pages while the magazine's owner frowned and fidgeted.

Suddenly, just as the man was about to turn a page, Papa Schimmelhorn reached out and clutched his arm. "Vait! *Donnerwetter*, dot iss Albert!" His free hand pointed at a picture of a kindly old soul badly in need of a haircut. "Hold shtill, I vant to read . . ."

The man squirmed and made futile angry noises—and Papa Schimmelhorn plowed through a paragraph which stated that Professor Albert Einstein had gone to Harvard to deliver a series of lectures on his new gravitational theory.

"Always I know dot he iss shmart!" Letting go, Papa Schimmelhorn shook his head wonderingly. "Now they haff made him a professor—imachine it!"

As his erstwhile victim, spluttering, removed across the aisle, he sat back sharply. "Ach, Lidle Anton, it iss a choke on us. For two weeks, Albert iss away! Ve must get off at der



next station, und take der train inthead to Massachuzetts. At vunce I shpeak to der conductor."

He expressed this resolve firmly, and he would certainly have put it into execution—if the brunette had not come in.

She was a very well-turned brunette, a bit like those who used to undulate through the earlier efforts of Cecil B. De-Mille, but with modern upholstery. She wore something spectacularly black, dangled long scarlet earrings, and carried a neat overnight bag. As she came slithering up to them, her slanting eyes seemed to search each face longingly. Then they found Papa Schimmelhorn's and rested there. Passing by, she gave him a lingering, torrid smile.

Papa Schimmelhorn took a deep breath and looked at Little Anton. Little Anton uncrossed his eyes, drooled, and said, "Yum-yum." Momentarily, at least, *rapport* was re-established.

The brunette took the seat once occupied by the small, sallow man. Her perfume drifted forward to them powerfully.

It made the hairs in Papa Schimmelhorn's big ears quiver. "Liddle Anton," he said decisively. "I haff ideas . . ."

"Me too!" croaked Little Anton.

". . . und vun idea iss dot she iss going to Atlantic City, for der beaudty condests. Und anoder iss dot Albert iss very busy vith his grafity. Maybe ve should nodt bother him in Massachuzetts. It vould be rude. In two veeks he comes back. Iss plenty time. Ve, you und I, take maybe a vacation by der sea. Maybe ve go to this Atlantic City, vhere are such inderesting people. You can learn all aboutt America . . ."

The Lorelei Hotel was neither the finest nor the most fashionable in Atlantic City. Its days of glory had departed with the bloomer bathing suit, and now it catered to retired clergymen, lieutenant colonels' widows, and people in modest circumstances with four or more children.

Papa Schimmelhorn and Little Anton, falling into none of these categories, were welcomed coldly by the management. A grim Nantucket clerk inspected them, demanded payment in advance, and had them whisked so quickly through the lobby's purple plush and potted palms that they failed to see

the brunette and the small man in the pork-pie hat registering in their wake.

Papa Schimmelhorn surveyed their room with satisfaction. Appropriating the bed nearest the window, he unpacked his carpetbag, taking from it a gay aloha shirt, a pair of sandals, a suit of flowered puce pajamas which he suspended from the gilded gas-and-electric chandelier, and a cuckoo clock. This last, with the aid of a large nail and a shoe heel, he hung upon the wall.

"Chust like at home," he sighed—and waited for Little Anton to say something complimentary.

But there was no reply. Instead, behind him, he heard a sharp, metallic click. He turned—and gasped.

Kneeling on the floor, Little Anton was unlocking the first of three enormous suitcases.

"Where—?" exclaimed Papa Schimmelhorn. "Where did you get *those*?"

"Switzerland," said Little Anton placidly.

"But—*Gott im Himmel*—How?"

"I wanna be a smuggler. I'm practicing. When I'm real good, I'll sneak Chinks in over the border. But this'll do for now. You're a genius, Pop, you can figger the technique out in no time."

He opened the first suitcase. "Watches," he stated smugly, "two hunerd of 'em, duty free." He opened up the second. "French post cards," he announced. "They oughta go like hot cakes."

Papa Schimmelhorn took one quick look. "No vunder they exborted you from Schvitzerland," he muttered, turning crimson.

"My clothes and stuff," finished Little Anton, indicating the third suitcase. "They'll keep till later."

But Papa Schimmelhorn said nothing more. He sat down on his bed, and, while Little Anton busily took inventory, he ransacked his mind for scraps of information about his grand-nephew. Once in a while, he recalled, Mitzi Fledermaus had mentioned her small son in letters to Mama. Little Anton had been an imaginative child, dreaming funny dreams,

claiming to have playmates whom he alone could see, disappearing for hours on end mysteriously. And hadn't there been some odd business about shoplifting, which nobody could prove?

Papa Schimmelhorn's brain whirled and clicked, considering all these matters together with such other data as the lad's uncanny mastery of colloquial English. He came to a conclusion.

"*Mein* Lidtle Anton," he began sweetly. "I haff been thinking. Vhere iss vun chenius in der family iss maybe more . . ."

Little Anton was stuffing packages of post cards in his pockets. "Now you're catching on," he grunted without pausing.

". . . und right away, vhen you arrife, I say, 'Our Lidtle Anton iss zo shmart, a child protigy. Someday he iss a chenius chust like me.'"

"Pop," said Little Anton, "you don't know the half of it."

Papa Schimmelhorn's voice became deeply serious. "Ve cheniuses must shtick together, Lidtle Anton. I vill teach you eferthing I know, und you—" he rubbed his hands, "—vill show me how iss vorked der lidtle suidcase trick."

"Yuy-yuk!" crowed Little Anton. "You sure got a corny line, Pop." He moved toward the door.

"Vait, Lidtle Anton!" cried Papa Schimmelhorn. "Vhere are you going? Iss nine o'clock."

"I'm gonna peddle feelthy peectures," replied Little Anton, patting his bulging pockets. "This looks like just the place, and I need lettuce. And don't you worry none about the cops. They can't touch us wholesalers." He turned the knob. For a fraction of a second he crossed his eyes. "Wanna know something about that mouse aboard the train, Pop?" he asked. "*She's got a cuckoo tattooed on her tummy!*"

Abruptly the door closed behind him, and he was gone—leaving his great-uncle with an imagination nicely titillated, and an even tougher problem on his mind.

"Vould you belief it?" marveled Papa Schimmelhorn. "A cuckoo on der tummy. How beaudtiful"

Like a caged tom-tiger, he started pacing up and down.

*How* did the boy know? And how could that know-how be pried out of him? There—there had been something—something in one of Mitzi Fledermaus' letters, about how Little Anton, then aged four, had been reproofed for prattling of a corner around which no one else could see. Perhaps—

Papa Schimmelhorn stopped pacing. Changing to sandals and aloha shirt, he stretched his huge frame on the bed in order to attack the problem comfortably. Presently, the cuckoo on the wall popped in and out and sang ten times, marking the hour . . .

And, almost at once, there came a tiny knocking on the door.

"Ho-ho?" boomed Papa Schimmelhorn. "Liddle Anton, you are back zo soon?"

The door opened. But Little Anton did not enter. Instead, there stood the brunette. She was clad in cocktail pajamas of black and red, vaguely Chinese in motif, fitting her like a snake's new skin.

Her eyes went wide as she saw Papa Schimmelhorn. Her hand flew to her lips. "*Oh!*" she cried out. "I—I must have the wrong room!"

Papa Schimmelhorn bounded to his feet. His beard almost swept the floor as he bowed. He assured her gallantly that, from his point of view, quite the reverse was true.

Suddenly she smiled. "Why, I know *you*. The conductor told me you were going to Princeton. You're the professor who was on the train."

Papa Schimmelhorn hung his head modestly. "I am nodd a professor. I am chust a chenius. I haff nodd gone to Princeton because mein friend Albert Einstein iss away."

"A—a genius! *Oooh!*" Somehow the door seemed to close itself behind her. "Then you know all about *science*, don't you? I mean about geometry and physics and—well, *everything*?" She clasped her hands together. "Please, may I come and talk to you sometime, when—when you aren't busy inventing your new theories?"

Her voice was deep, disturbing—rather like Edith Piaf with whipped cream. It set the follicles of Papa Schimmelhorn's

beard to tingling. "I haff chust finished der qvota for this week!" he roared gleefully. "Ve can talk now—"

He came toward her, eyes focused on her midriff. He took her gently but very firmly by the elbow.

"Oh, Professor," she breathed, "I'm just so *lucky*."

Deciding to be subtle, he led her to a chair. "Der name iss Schimmelhorn," he cooed, "but you can call me Papa."

"My name is Sonya—er, that is, Sonya Lou."

"I call you Lulu. Dot iss easier. Don't vorry, I show you a goot time. I call der bellboy right away for popcorn."

"I just *adore* popcorn," said Sonya Lou.

He rang for room service. He sat down on the chair's arm beside her. He let his right hand wander to her waist.

She looked up at him. "Now you shall tell me about *science*," she whispered fervently.

Papa Schimmelhorn's left hand moved to join his right. Its index finger hovered over her bright pajama jacket's second button. "Ve shtart," he told her, "by talking aboutt birds. I luff der liddle birds—zo cute! Shparrows and pipshqeaks und robin-redchests. But ezpecially—" he gave the button an experimental tweak, "—dear liddle cuckoos."

Ferdinand Wilen's arrival in New Haven coincided closely with Papa Schimmelhorn's departure—and, at first, these two events seemed to do wonders for Captain Perseus Otter. He now jutted forward jauntily, as though, after a perilous and weary voyage, he had been dry-docked and given a fresh coat of paint. His likeness to the Hero of Trafalgar became even more striking than before. He even made an effort to resume his fruitless courtship of a lush divorcée named Mrs. Bucklebank.

But two days passed—and three—and four. And on the fifth day Captain Otter found himself once more in the presence of old Heinrich Luedesing and of the Board. Only now they were reinforced. Wilen sat there, with a nervous tic and bags under his eyes. So did a vice admiral, bluff-bowed and broad in the beam. And two rear admirals. And a big, ruddy officer whose fourth row of gold braid was topped off with a loop.

The three admirals, obviously, were giving Captain Otter the deep freeze. The other officer, just as obviously, was trying to conceal what amounted to an utter fascination.

"Dr. Wilen," rapped the vice admiral, "please make your report."

Wilen's thin hands wrestled with each other on the table. "I've checked everything," he said hysterically. "I've gone over it four times—every servo-mechanism, every relay, each power supply and part and process—*everything*. And all I've found is a little waste space, and four terminals that don't lead anywhere." He gnawed his nails. "It ought to work, really it ought to! And—and it still turns out my tubes with *c-c-clockwork* in them, no matter what I do! And they're still *outside* when they should be *in*. Oh, ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!"

He collapsed sobbing; and the vice admiral turned to Captain Otter.

"Well?" he said.

Captain Otter shivered and said nothing.

"Speak up, Otter. Did you or did you not recommend the retirement of this—er, this Papa Schimmelhorn?"

"Yes, sir. But . . ."

"Do you realize, Otter, that the Wilen scanner is a project on which we are engaged jointly with the British? As you have perhaps heard, they are our allies. They have gone to the trouble, Otter, to send their largest carrier over here—H.M.S. *Impressive*, commanded by this gentleman." He inclined his head toward the gold braid with the loops. "Captain Sir Sebastian Cobble, C.B. She's in New York harbor, equipped with everything except Assembly M. Assembly M must be installed aboard her in two days. Forty-eight hours, Otter. See to it. I'm holding you responsible."

There was a sigh, possibly of relief, from Woodrow Luedesing.

"I was given to understand, Admiral—" Captain Perseus Otter was very pale, "—that my duties here were advisory. I have done what I could. I have even sent a man to search for Schimmelhorn. Beyond that . . ."

"Come, come, Otter! It's scarcely our tradition to push off

our responsibilities, especially on civilians. Do you mean to tell me that since you came here you have been nothing but a figurehead?"

There was a sharp crack as Captain Sir Sebastian Cobble, C.B. bit his pipestem through.

"Certainly *not*, sir," sputtered Captain Otter.

"Well, then, you should have no trouble. Find this Schimmelhorn, have him fix this Assembly M or whatever it is, and get it aboard *Impressive* right away."

While the vice admiral was saying this, a secretary had entered and whispered something in old Heinrich's ear. Now, "I am zorry," he announced unhappily. "Papa Schimmelhorn ve haff nodt found, but Mama Schimmelhorn iss here. If you vant, I bring her in."

"By all means," nodded the vice admiral. "She may have information."

Old Heinrich left the room and returned immediately escorting a very straight old lady in stiff black taffeta. She was armed with an umbrella, and there was fire in her eye.

"Chentlemen," said Heinrich Luedesing, "I like you to meet Mama Schimmelhorn."

The admirals and the captains rose.

Mama Schimmelhorn surveyed them. "*Gobs*," she remarked disapprovingly. "Drinking und chazing girls und making noise at night."

There was a display of self-restraint. "Ma-am—" the vice admiral bowed. "I am delighted. I am sure that you can be of help to us. We must find your husband . . ."

"Ha!" The sharp ferrule of Mama Schimmelhorn's umbrella tapped the floor. "Dot no-goot! Fife days he iss away—und here iss vot I get!" Opening a black, beaded reticule, she fished out a post card, and passed it to him.

It was not one of Little Anton's. It was a picture of the Taj Mahal. On one of the windows, a big X had been scrawled. And, on the reverse, there was a message which, roughly translated, read: *Haffing shvell time. Vish you vas here. X iss our room. Luff und kisses, your goot husband, Papa. (Alzo Liddle Anton.)*

"But he forgets der postmark!" cried Mama Schimmelhorn. "Atlantic City! Chust wait until I catch!"

The vice admiral thanked her. He promised to deliver Papa Schimmelhorn into her fond custody. Then he turned again to Captain Perseus Otter.

"Well, we know where he is," he declared. "Take my advice, Otter. If it's agreeable to Sir Sebastian here, he can take you aboard *Impressive*, and put to sea. Contact the shore patrol at Atlantic City. They'll help you pick up Schimmelhorn. I hear he has one of the assemblies with him, so that's all settled. Now do you see how simple it all is?"

"Dot's vot I told you." Old Heinrich smiled and nodded. "Don't worry. Papa Schimmelhorn vill fix."

"I shall sail at four, sir," said Captain Sir Sebastian Cobble, eyeing Captain Otter dubiously.

But Dr. Ferdinand Wilen said never a word. Staring intently at a point in space, he was busily vibrating his lower lip with a forefinger.

While the inventor of Assembly M was puzzling himself into this tizzy at New Haven, Papa Schimmelhorn and Little Anton were by no means idle in Atlantic City.

Day by day, Little Anton's smuggled stock of watches and French post cards dwindled, while his newly acquired roll of bills fattened correspondingly.

Day after day, too, Papa Schimmelhorn pursued Sonya Lou, or Lulu. He tempted her, successively, with feats of strength, accounts of his past conquests, light refreshments, and burning words of love. He even, on two occasions, gave her flowers.

And nothing worked, not even the desolate (and absolutely false) complaint that Mama Schimmelhorn did not understand him. So far as he was concerned, the cuckoo tattooed on her tummy remained a mystery.

He took it in his stride, confiding cheerfully in Little Anton late at night.

"You listen, Little Anton," he would say. "Vith dot girl



Lulu iss something wrong upshtairs. Imachinel Always she talks of scienze, scienze, scienze."

"Eight hunerd and sixty, and eighty, and a hunerd—makes nine hunerd," Little Anton would reply, counting his ill-gotten gains. "Not bad for three days' work, huh, Pop?"

"Maybe I pinch a liddle—she says, 'No, no. Tell me aboutt der relatify.' Maybe I bite her ear—she says, 'Don'tt think of me. I chust adore der dingus in der box—vot iss der princible?' Ach, Liddle Anton, such a voman! It iss noddt natural."

Then, "Ya know what?" Little Anton would remark. "I betcha she's a spy."

And so it went until the afternoon before Captain Otter's painful experience with the admirals. Little Anton had sold out all his post cards except an assorted package of three dozen, and he was taking a well-earned rest in the lobby of the Lorelei. Deep in a chair behind a potted palm, eyes crossed luxuriously, he was examining the more interesting features of three plump young matrons gossiping some yards away.

Suddenly, almost in his ear, he heard a voice. It was low and vibrant, and he recognized it instantly as Sonya Lou's.

"But, Boguslav," she was protesting, "I *have* been using Technique Forty-four, just as the *Handbook* says. Can I help it if the old fool won't respond? All he wants to do is pinch and feel and take my clothes off. My God, I'm black and blue all over!"

A man's voice answered her. "Then you have blundered, Sonya. In the *Handbook*, his classification is *Beast, Bourgeois, Individualistic, Subtype Seven-C*. Therefore it is the correct technique."

Very quietly, Little Anton swiveled round. Forgetting the young matrons, he peeked through palm leaves—and saw a pork-pie hat.

The man's voice hardened. "The *Handbook* is based on Marxist ideology. It is never wrong. You know the penalty for failure, do you not?"

"Of course I do." She laughed nervously. "I'm not giving up—I have another date with him tonight. But—oh, why

couldn't it be that stupid boy of his instead? I could use Technique One—you know, in bed with nothing on—the shoe box in advance—and you could come and rescue me in time." She groaned. "At least I wouldn't have to wrestle for a week."

For a few moments Little Anton's face assumed the pale cast of thought. Then, silently, he took the post cards in his hand and pushed them through the leaves and dropped them in Boguslav's coat pocket.

Presently, when the little man left the hotel alone, he followed him.

That night Sonya Lou did not keep her date with Papa Schimmelhorn. He waited twenty minutes, thirty, thirty-five. He paced the floor. Finally, calling her room and finding she was out, he shrugged his shoulders philosophically. "Iss plenty fishes in der sea," he told himself. "Der cuckoo iss tattooed, zo it vill vait."

With that, he thought of a manicurist whom he had carefully cultivated as a spare, poured out half the bag of hard rock candy which he had purchased that afternoon as bait, and, humming cheerily, went off to her apartment.

Her almost certain lack of avian adornment did not spoil his evening in the least—and he was in a mellow mood when he came back to the hotel at four A.M. He smiled tolerantly at Little Anton's untouched bed, tumbled into his own, and slept the sleep of conscious virtue until noon.

On awakening, his first thought was of Sonya Lou. Picking up the phone, he shouted. "Goot morning!" to the clerk. "Iss Papa Schimmelhorn. I vant to shpeak to Lulu!"

"Miss Mikvik checked out two hours ago," said the flat Nantucket voice clammily. "The management would like to know when you intend to follow her example."

"Vot?" The cuckoo on the abdomen—so beautiful—took wing and disappeared, perhaps forever. "Vhere did she go?"

"No forwarding address," snapped the receiver. It clicked offensively, and all was still.

Papa Schimmelhorn replaced it on the hook. He understood immediately that his magnetic personality had been too

much for Lulu. It had aroused hidden passions of which she was afraid, and she had run away. Pityingly, he hoped the poor girl would never realize what she had missed.

He sat up and stretched, intending to give Little Anton a useful pointer about Life and women—and found that Little Anton was still among the missing. “Ach, vell,” he thought, “boys vill be boys. He iss vith some high zchool girl—necking und pedting like der liddle dofes—zo cutel!”

Full of sentiment, he dressed, brushed out his beard, and went to lunch. *En route*, a headline caught his eye:

RED DIPLOMAT ARRESTED HERE! *Obscene Pictures ‘Dirty Wall Street Plot’ Declares Iron Curtain Attaché!*

He looked more closely:

*July 12:* [he read] Boguslav V. Popopoff, Rumanian consular commercial attaché, is currently in Atlantic City’s jail charged with possession of three dozen pornographic post cards described by arresting officers as “the hottest we’ve seen yet.”

Picked up late yesterday on a tip furnished by an unidentified teen-ager whom he allegedly approached as a potential customer, Popopoff was . . .

“Tsk-tsk, how inderesting,” said Papa Schimmelhorn, as he continued on his way, to spend the balance of the afternoon along the boardwalk and the beach, surrounded by a giggling coterie in negligible bathing suits, each one of whom he graciously permitted to pull his whiskers, feel his gigantic biceps, and steal a kiss.

It was not until after supper, when he was returning dreamily to the hotel, that other matters forced themselves upon his mind. A gray jeep whipped around a corner, slammed on its brakes, and skidded alongside. Its pair of shore patrolmen regarded him with some astonishment.

“I reckon you’re Pappy Schimmelhorn?” one of them said.

“Der vun und only, Chunior—dot’s me!”

“Hop aboard, Pappy. You’re comin’ for a ride. The Navy wants you bad.”

"Go away!" laughed Papa Schimmelhorn, stepping back a pace. "Der funny pants I do nodd like. Also I am too old."

"Look, Pappy." The jeep began to snort impatiently. "We ain't *recruitin'* you. There's big brass in a hurry back at your hotel. Now tuck the spinach in and come along."

"Ach, dot iss different." At once, Papa Schimmelhorn guessed that Captain Otter was in need of help. "He wants to ask me how to catch his girl. Of course I come!"

He vaulted in. The jeep took off. Beard streaming in the wind, he was whisked back to the Lorelei, where the shore patrolmen accompanied him directly to his door.

He entered with a flourish. "Vell, sailor boy," he roared, spying Captain Perseus Otter, "now you haff goot senzel Soon, when I teach you, der women vill run after you like flies." His gaze moved to the right. "Und you bring a friend!" he cried delightedly. "A cholly Chack Tar! Goot, ve get him a date too." He looked between them. "Oh, ho-ho-ho! Und here iss Little Anton, der naughdy boy, who iss oudt all night."

Captain Otter rose. A mild case of seasickness had made him rather green around the gills. He looked as though he had spent some years under a moldering bowsprit in the Sargasso Sea.

"Mr. Schimmelhorn." He tried heroically to smile. "This is Captain Sir Sebastian Cobble, commanding His Majesty's Ship *Impressive*, now lying-to offshore."

Papa Schimmelhorn and Captain Cobble shook hands, expressing mutual pleasure.

"Clever lad you have here," said Sir Sebastian, gesturing at Little Anton with his pipe. "Frightfully well informed. We've been discussing smuggling—fascinating—interested in it since I was a boy."

"He iss pregocious," bragged Papa Schimmelhorn. "It iss in der family. Myself—"

Hastily, Captain Perseus Otter intervened. "I fear that I have failed to make our purpose clear. It is not—er, recreation. Certain—um—*difficulties* have come up in the plant, and—well, the long and short of it, ha-ha, is that we now want you to

fix the assembly you have with you as soon as possible, and install it aboard *Impressive* right away."

"Ha, zo der vorks iss fouled?" laughed Papa Schimmelhorn. "I told you zo. Vell, don'tt you vorry, sailor boy, vhen Albert back to Princeton comes, ve fix. Iss chust ten days, und ve can make some vhoopee vwhile ve wait."

"*Ten days?*" Captain Otter thought dismally of his number on the promotion list. "It's an emergency. You'll have to do it by tomorrow noon. *Please*, Mr. Schimmelhorn."

"Dot iss imbossible. Der inzide iss shtill oudt. I get der dingus, und I show you vhy—"

Little Anton shifted uncomfortably. "Hey, Pop . . ."

"Shh, Liddle Anton. Vhen I am busy, do not inderrupt." Papa Schimmelhorn was on his knees, searching beneath his bed. "How stranchel I hide der shoe box here before I go, because it iss a zecret. Now where iss?"

"Pop."

"Shudt up! Maybe iss on der oder side . . ."

"*Pop.*" Little Anton said, "you might as well get up. Your shoe box isn't there."

There was a dreadful hush.

"Where d'ya think I been all night? That Sonya Lou of yours was after it—she was a spy. I peddled it to her . . ." Little Anton smirked and licked his chops. "But not for money, Pop. Uh-uh."

"Vor?" bellowed Papa Schimmelhorn. "Vot haff you done?"

"Incredible!" Captain Cobble cried, ruining another pipe-stem permanently.

"*Treason!* Cold-blooded treason!" gasped Captain Perseus Otter, turning an even more livid color than before.

"Aw, keep yer britches on." Little Anton remained unperturbed. "I sealed that shoe box good. I betcha she's half-way to Europe with it now. But they won't find no dingus in it. What kinda sucker do you think I am?" He pointed at the bare nail protruding from the wall. "Anything secret about a cuckoo clock?" he said.

Captain Otter wiped the cold sweat from his brow. His momentary vision of Boards of Inquiry and of Naval Courts

started to dissolve. "You—you mean?" he stuttered. "*It's still here?*"

"Right in Pop's carpetbag." Little Anton swelled his chest. "I guess I'm pretty sharp, huh, Cap?"

Papa Schimmelhorn reached in the carpetbag. He found the silver ovoid instantly. He reached in again, and felt around—and brought his hand out empty. "But here iss only half." He frowned. "Vhere iss der rest of it?"

"Oh, *that*." Little Anton smiled superciliously. "I fixed it, genius. I put it back inside where it belongs."

"Nonzense!" exclaimed Papa Schimmelhorn.

"Okay, you don't believe me." Sneering, Little Anton held out a hand. "Gimme."

He took Assembly M. His eyes crossed quite appallingly. His fingers made one quick and curious movement . . .

And there was the tube, complete with clockwork, out again.

"Betcha you don't know how it's done!" he challenged them.

But Captain Perseus Otter was not interested. "My boy," he said, not unemotionally, "these little technical details can wait. You have done splendidly. I personally will mention you in my report. But now we have important work to do." He tapped his watch. "We'd best be under way."

And, as they headed for the sea and H.M.S. *Impressive*, he told himself that now, at least, their troubles were all over. He had forgotten the brass gears in the tube.

Thirty-six hours after Papa Schimmelhorn and Little Anton put to sea, the Chief of Naval Operations flew in from Washington. Accompanied by two harried persons from the State Department, he stormed into the office of that vice admiral who had made life so difficult for Captain Otter, fixed him with his glittering eye, and, in the most unfriendly tone imaginable, said, "*Well?*"

The vice admiral shuddered and said nothing.

"Speak up, Marlinson. You are aware that the British are our allies, are you not? You understand that, like most seafaring people, they much prefer to keep their naval craft

afloat? And you admit, I trust, that it is to our interest to help them do so?"

"Y-yes, sir—but . . ."

"May I remind you, Marlinson, that we've had Otters in the Navy since the Revolution? Surely you have heard of Commodore Columbus Otter, who sailed his squadron into the Susquehannah River and disappeared, a feat no other officer has duplicated? And of Commander Leviathan Otter, who went down with the monitor *Mugwump* in Charleston harbor in 1863, quite certain that he was putting in to Portland, Maine? And of Lieutenant Ahab Otter, who so clearly demonstrated the impracticability of diving submarines with their hatches open?" He raised his voice, "*And knowing all this, Marlinson,*" he roared, "*you ordered Captain Perseus Otter ABOARD A SHIP!*"

Shamefacedly, the vice admiral hung his head.

"And not just *any* ship. Fully aware of his remarkable appearance, you ordered him aboard a *British* ship . . ."

The Chief of Naval Operations continued for several minutes more, deploring the effete age which prohibited such picturesque and useful customs as keel-hauling and flogging through the fleet. Then—

"Marlinson," he said, "H.M.S. *Impressive* picked up your people on Wednesday, at 22:04. At 23:18, we received a strange radiogram. It read, SCANNER WORKS STOP PUTTING TO SEA FOR MORE EXTENSIVE TESTS STOP ARRIVE NEW YORK NOON FRIDAY STOP PAPA SENDS LOVE TO MAMA STOP (SIGNED) COBBLE. There has been nothing since. Every available air and surface craft has searched without success. We can only conclude that H.M.S. *Impressive* has gone down with all hands. There will be grave international repercussions, Marlinson."

"I can just hear Mr. Churchill now," groaned the first State Department man, "in Parliament."

"And *Pravda*," said the second, somberly. "And Senator McCarthy. And—and Mr. Bevan."

"Don't even *think* of it . . ."

The Chief of Naval Operations rose to go. "We've kept this

secret, Admiral Marlinson, so far. But after noon today it must come out. It's your responsibility. Therefore you will accompany the British naval attaché when he goes out to meet their ship. When she does not show up, you will explain why she isn't there. After that, you can report to me in person."

They left; and, half an hour later, the vice admiral dismally stepped aboard the burnished barge which, he was sure, fate had chosen to witness one of the closing scenes of his career. The British naval attaché was there, attended by two aides, sundry officers of his own staff, and a pert ensign in the Waves. So were Heinrich Luedesing and Woodrow Luedesing and Ferdinand Wilen, somewhat calmer now.

Disciplining his voice, he greeted them. The barge cast off; and, all the way down the bay, he prayed devoutly for a miracle. But, when minutes ahead of time the point of rendezvous was reached, the sea was bare.

The naval attaché searched the horizon with binoculars. "Strange," he said, "very strange. She really ought to be in sight by *now*."

Everyone else made similar remarks.

Only Vice Admiral Marlinson was silent. The seconds passed. High noon came nearer quite remorselessly. Anxiety appeared on every face but Heinrich Luedesing's.

Finally, when only fifteen seconds still remained, the Admiral braced himself. He drew the naval attaché aside. "It is my painful duty . . ." he began. He stopped to wipe his brow. "It is my duty to inform . . ."

He had no chance to finish. There was a shrill squeal from the little Wave, a general cry—

"By God, *there* she is!" exclaimed the attaché, pointing excitedly to port.

And there, scarcely a cable-length away, long and gray and grim, lay H.M.S. *Impressive*. Her crew was mustered on the flight deck for review. Her band was striking up *God Save the King*. And, over all, a foghorn voice was shouting, "ACH, HEINRICH! HERE I AM! YOO-HOO! BLOW DER MAN DOWN! SHIP AHOY!"

Within two minutes, the dazed vice admiral was being



piped aboard. In less than three, he had met Papa Schimmelhorn and Little Anton, both wearing jaunty sailor hats with H.M.S. *Impressive* on their ribbons. In five, he had recovered to the point where, drawing Captain Perseus Otter slightly to one side, he could demand, "Where in the name of all that's holy HAVE YOU BEEN?"

Captain Otter was unshaven. He wore his cap at an angle which, on any junior officer, he would strongly have disapproved. But there was a new light in his eye.

"At sea, sir!" said he.

"*Indeed?*" barked the vice admiral, warming up. "Are you aware, sir, that every blessed plane and ship and State Department clerk has been searching for you from hell to breakfast since you disappeared?"

Captain Otter smiled. His smile broadened. He began to laugh. He held his sides, threw back his head, and whooped.

The admiral's emotional barometer swung sharply over toward apoplexy. "And would you mind informing me just *what* is so amusing?" he asked dangerously.

But it was Papa Schimmelhorn who answered him. In the most friendly fashion, he slapped him on the back. "*Ho-ho-ho-ho!*" he boomed, "Of courze you could nodt find us, sailor boy. It iss der Schimmelhorn Effect! Der liddle vheels inzide der tube go round. Und right away ve are *infisible!*"

"In-*invisible?*"

"Precisely, sir," said Captain Perseus Otter, making his comeback with surprising speed. "And completely so—to the human eye, to cameras, even to radar. However, it is my duty to request that you, sir, ask for no further information." He smiled serenely. "The Schimmelhorn Effect is highly secret."

"But—" The admiral started to protest. He got no further. "*Eeeek!*" cried the little Wave, behind him.

He whirled. The Wave was blushing furiously. She was pointing an outraged finger at Captain Cobble. "Make—make him stop *doing* that!" she squealed.

Captain Cobble chuckled. His eyes uncrossed themselves. "Here, here! What's going on?" snapped the vice admiral.

For just an instant Captain Sir Sebastian Cobble looked round self-consciously. Then:

"Going on, sir?" He winked at Little Anton. "Ah—just a bit more of this scientific know-how. The—the Fledermaus Effect."

It would be profitless to elaborate at too great a length on subsequent events aboard H.M.S. *Impressive*. The vice admiral delivered a short and stirring address, touching on such subjects as "tradition" and "hands across the sea." Captain Sir Sebastian Cobble bid a warm farewell to Captain Perseus Otter, assuring him—perhaps with his own vessel's unadorned prow in mind—that the Royal Navy could always find a place for him if he retired. Finally Papa Schimmelhorn was borne down the gangplank on the shoulders of four stalwart seamen, while the entire ship's complement sang *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow* at the top of their voices.

Immediately afterward, Captain Otter, Papa Schimmelhorn, and Little Anton were flown to Washington, where they were questioned in great secrecy by naval experts, by technical experts, and by envious representatives of the Air Forces and the Army—all of whom, finding themselves beyond their depth, concurred in recommending that the whole business be left in Captain Otter's obviously able hands.

It was not until four days later that the Board of Directors of the Luedesing Time and Instrument Corporation of New Haven met for the express purpose of establishing a new order.

At the head of the table, old Heinrich Luedesing glared at his son Woodrow and at the Board. "I haff talked to Papa Schimmelhorn," he said. "Because ve are old friends, he says he vill come back—but only if ve make him Chenereal Manager, und Voodrow vorks for him . . ."

"This is ridiculous!" Woodrow Luedesing's indignation was loud and shrill. "The man is utterly unqualified! Why, I'll resign! I'll . . ."

"Bah!" Old Heinrich cut him short. "You vatch oudt, Voodrow, more nonzense und you haff a chob vorking inztead for Lidtle Anton!"

Woodrow Luedesing looked around at the Board members

for support—and found them unresponsive. Pouting, he lapsed into a sullen silence.

"Vell, dot iss zettled," his father said decisively. "Now, Herr Doktor Wilen makes his report, und Captain Otter maybe giffs a speech. Then ve haff a vote."

Ferdinand Wilen stood up, his expression a curious mixture of relaxation and bewilderment. "Gentlemen," he said, "I know you realize how vital the Schimmelhorn Effect is to our strength and our security. I'm sure you'd like to understand just how it works. Well, so would I. At present, though, the important thing is that it *does* work."

Several of the directors nodded emphatically.

"Your Papa Schimmelhorn—" Wilen grinned, "—did his best to explain the principle. He said that it was all because of Maxie's Constance, with whom he first became acquainted as a janitor at the Geneva Institute of Higher Physics. It took me quite a while to see what he was getting at. His genius functions at a subconscious level. It absorbs theoretical information which is quite meaningless to him, extrapolates from it, and integrates it with his own primitive technology. Presto, out comes a—dingus! In this instance, by *Maxie* I think he means Max Planck. The little wheels go round—something happens which may involve the value of *Planck's Constant*, and—we have invisibility!"

"Remarkable!" said one or two of the directors. "Astounding!" murmured several others.

"To say the least! And he used the same principle to conceal his extra manufacturing parts. Invisible, they occupied the 'waste space' in the unit, and were powered by leads which seemed to go nowhere. That was why it drove me to distraction when I tried to fix it."

"But why didn't the—the dingus come out in one piece instead of two?" someone asked.

"Because he missed three weeks of lectures in Geneva. Something just wasn't in the recipe. And that—" he shuddered slightly, "—brings us to Little Anton Fledermaus, who has turned out to be a perfect substitute for that something that isn't there. In childhood, rare individuals display supranormal

powers—the psychokinetic poltergeist phenomenon, for instance. According to the parapsychologists who have examined him, our Little Anton has retained contact with an area of existence which he describes as ‘just around the corner.’ It seems to have no ordinary spatiotemporal coordinates, but to exist purely *in relation to him*. Light contact with it—when his eyes cross—enables him to see through such otherwise frustrating substances as silk, wool, and nylon. A closer contact—well, you’ve seen the demonstration. He holds the shell of Assembly M ‘around the corner.’ Half of it seems to disappear. He pops the tube in. And there we are!”

A portly director wrinkled his brow unhappily. “This science stuff’s too deep for me,” he grumbled. “What do we do now? That’s what I want to know.”

Wilén resumed his seat, and Captain Otter rose to address the Board. He was still unshaven. In fact, it was now apparent that he was letting his beard grow.

“I feel that this is not the time,” he stated, “to quibble over theories and petty technicalities. Papa Schimmelhorn has shown his *practical* ability to my complete satisfaction. Furthermore, he and young Fledermaus disposed adroitly of two extremely dangerous foreign agents. It is the opinion of the Department of the Navy—” he frowned severely at Woodrow Luedesing, “—that Papa Schimmelhorn should be reinstated on his own terms.”

He sat down again. Old Heinrich called the Board to order. And without delay, by a vote of eight to one, Papa Schimmelhorn was promoted to the post of General Manager.

A burst of cheering followed the announcement, and a secretary was instantly sent off to carry the good news. Some minutes passed before the Board became aware that Dr. Wilén had something more to say.

“Though I am not associated with this firm,” he began apologetically, “I should like to make one suggestion . . .”

Old Heinrich urged him to proceed.

“A suggestion which I trust will be taken in good part by all concerned. Papa Schimmelhorn is undoubtedly a genius. So, in his way, is Little Anton. Besides, both of them have a

certain excess of exuberance, of *joie de vivre*. Perhaps it would be well—tactfully, of course—to take a few precautions in order to—er, protect them from themselves?”

Old Heinrich nodded soberly. Captain Perseus Otter reluctantly agreed that Dr. Wilen might have a point. But Woodrow Luedesing reacted much more sharply.

His pout vanished. Abruptly his face regained its rosy hue. He smiled beatifically.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “leave that to me.”

At three the following afternoon, Woodrow Luedesing found Papa Schimmelhorn and Little Anton in the office which he himself had formerly occupied. They were entertaining the shipping-office blonde. Papa Schimmelhorn, his arm around her slender waist, was telling her all about Sonya Lou. “. . . und Little Anton says dot it vas nodt a cuckoo after all! It vas a bullvinch! *Ho-ho-ho!*”

“Am I intruding?” Woodrow asked diffidently.

Papa Schimmelhorn assured him that he was not. “*Ach*, now you vork for me, you come right in! I vas chust telling Mimi here aboutt der lady shpy. Imachine it! To Europe she has gone vith der old shoe box, und opened it, und . . . Here in der paper, look. Oh, *ho-ho-ho!*”

Woodrow Luedesing accepted the newspaper, and, while Papa Schimmelhorn almost split his sides, he read a dispatch from *Tass* which claimed peevishly that the first cuckoo clock had really been invented by an intelligent young peasant from Kiev centuries before the Western world had even heard of such a thing.

“How fascinating,” Woodrow remarked politely. “But what I really came to see you about, sir, was a small business matter . . .”

“Don’t vorry aboutt business, Voodrow!” cried Papa Schimmelhorn. “I teach you now how nodt to be a stuffed shirt. I teach you to haff fun!”

“That’s very good of you,” replied Woodrow, “but, as you are General Manager, I felt that you should be the first to meet our new Director of Security. She’s quite remarkable.”

"*She?*" Papa Schimmelhorn flexed his biceps automatically. "Woodrow, iss she beaudtiful?"

"I would say statuesque, sir. But come see for yourself. She's waiting for you in her office now."

Papa Schimmelhorn gave the shipping-room blonde a hasty peck. Taking Little Anton and Woodrow each by an arm, he led the way.

Thus they marched down the hall—but, when they came to the door marked *Security*, Woodrow stepped aside. "I'll see you later, sir," he said, with a broad wink.

"You are a goot boy, after all," asserted Papa Schimmelhorn, returning it.

Then Papa Schimmelhorn and Little Anton opened the door and went in eagerly. They stopped dead still. They stared—

"*Ha—!*" said Mama Schimmelhorn.

## P. Schuyler Miller STATUS QUONDAM

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*Simon MacIvor, geologist, college instructor, and erst-while fighter with the Greek Partisans against the Nazis, was fed up with the world.*

*In the way men sometimes dream of the unattainable, he longed to flee the cares of a world of Big Business, Big Government, Big Wars, and little men. To him, it seemed as though the Golden Age of Pericles was the ideal time for men to have lived.*

*Much to his surprise, a large, red-headed, and alcoholic genius of an Irishman provided him with an opportunity to test his theories about another age at first hand.*

*After a lamentable hiatus of five years or more, P. Schuyler Miller returns triumphantly to the science-fiction fold with one of the best jobs of historical research ever offered to lovers of the Time-travel genre.*

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**F**ROM THE TOP of the olive tree Simon MacIvor could see Athens sprawled in a mosaic of pink-and-white roofs around the long whaleback ridge of the Acropolis. It looked cleaner than the Athens he knew, twenty-four hundred odd years in the future; there was no smudge of soft-coal smoke hanging over it, none of that ingrained dinginess which cities took on, even under the white, Aegean sun. This Greece looked cleaner and greener and somehow softer, though the bare, gray bones of the land protruded gauntly through a skin of worn-out soil. Hellas was an old land, and a hungry one, even now.

Something rattled viciously among the branches under him, sending down a shower of leaves and twigs. MacIvor hauled up his sandaled feet hastily. Shades of Mark Twain! he thought. Do I have to act out every fly-blown cliché of time-travel just to prove I'm here? At least I'm in no danger of murdering my own grandfather—or am I? See here, MacIvor, ninety-five generations back you'd have more grandfathers than there are people on Earth, or stars in the Galaxy! You're kin to everyone—black, white, brown, or pinto! You as much as take a poke at anyone, and the odds are you won't even get to be a twinkle in your daddy's eye.

The lad downstairs didn't have as long a spear as the one Sir Kay had poked at the Connecticut Yankee, but he was doing his best. He looked to be nineteen or twenty—evidently one of the *ephebi* in his last year of U.M.T., and a damn sight happier about it than the men in Simon's classes back at Bryson University. He was rigged out in a short white night-shirt-effect that barely covered the bronzed bare thighs with which he gripped his horse's sides. A short black cape, a round shield, a floppy black hat big enough to serve as a sunshade, skin-high red boots with silver spurs, a nasty-looking short sword—and that damned spear! You had to be somebody to get your training in the Athenian cavalry, and brother did this lad know it!

Simon eased his weight gingerly over on the other haunch. His rig didn't cover much more than the scanties the youngster was wearing. A white linen tunic that didn't quite come to his knees—he'd gotten it sewn up the side by a Greek tailor in the year 1951—a long wool cloak with a fancy pattern around the edge—and sandals that had already rubbed a raw spot on the inside of both his big toes. That was what a Greek gentleman would wear in the fifth century B.C. He had it on the best authority. He had looked at statues. He had looked at vases. And a dozen or so years ago he had taken a college course in ancient Greek history. That, and a belt. But that belt was strictly another matter!

MacIvor ran his hands over it gently. Stitched into it were the coils which generated MacManus' (God rest his soul)



temporal-displacement field. Those three lumps were the three stressed crystals which powered the thing. Three water-white, artificial diamonds the size of navy beans, whose compact crystal structure had been brutally contorted to store up the tremendous energies applied to them. Released through MacManus' coils, that energy would hurl the belt and its wearer kicking and squirming into the middle of next week—or, in his case, last week several thousand times removed. Triggered in any other way, it would blast the unlucky meddler clear out of the far side of eternity. One of the three crystals had brought him here: and now it was just another diamond. The second, matched to it as exactly as MacManus' finest instruments could manage, would take him back if he decided to go back, and the third diamond was insurance.

Insurance, Simon decided, was what this situation cried for. Let some yokel like this Hopalong Nikolides get his hands on it, accidentally strip the guard ring off one of the live diamonds, and he, it, the tree, the horse, and most of this part of Greece would become a new constellation. As a guess, Simon would say that was what had happened to MacManus' home town, although, since that had been twenty-four hundred or so years in the future, the Russians had contended the American imperialist warmonger dogs had accidentally set off an H-bomb. This Simon knew for sure: MacManus had made two belts, one of which he had given to Simon, and the second of which he took home with him when he left Washington in wrath and muttering.

The fork in which Simon was perched like an indignant stork had one dead side which looked as if it might be hollow. Wedging one foot in the crotch, he hauled himself carefully to his feet. Sure enough! Unfastening the belt, he slid it gingerly into the hollow, making sure that the end had hit bottom before he let go. The softer leather pouch in which he had fifth-century coins that had cost him most of his bank account in 1951 and a clean *chiton* went in on top of it.

Now for the lad below. Simon had a fairly pragmatic vocabulary of twentieth-century Greek which he had picked up in these same hills during eight months with the partisans,

back—or forward—in the late war. He had added a quick cram course in the classical equivalent. Just as he was ready to try some of it out, he spotted a small cloud of dust moving along the road from the direction of Athens. He thought he could hear the distant clop-clop of horses' feet. Apparently the party for which this lad below was a scout. Simon hunkered down as far as he dared, with one arm around the trunk of the tree for security, and peered down through the leaves.

"Hoy!" he called. "You on the horse!"

That did it. The youngster hauled back on the bridle until his big black horse pawed at the air. He brandished his lance like a drum-majorette's baton. "Come down out of there, you barbarian ape," he screamed, "or I'll skewer your liver for an augury!"

"Gently, friend, gently." With the cavalry on its way, now was not the auspicious moment for insult, but how did you reason with these adolescent strong-men? "I'm a stranger here, as you noticed. Can you set me on the right road to Athens?"

Even with Simon's limited knowledge of fifth-century Greek, it was clear where he would be set. "You should know," the *ephebe* told him. "Athena's tree is sacred. So much as scrape her bark, and I'll have you before a jury for sacrilege!"

How in hopping Hades did you get olives down out of these trees if you couldn't climb them? Simon wondered. Maybe this was something special, set off by itself on a hilltop as it was, and maybe this kind of olive was inedible anyway.

Athena took things into her own hands at that point. As he probed cautiously with one toe for a new foothold, the other sandal skidded out from under him. With a whoop of dismay, Simon went over backward and came thumping down, limb by limb, to crash in a shower of leaves directly under the horse's nose. That beast took off like Pegasus, and his startled rider, without benefit of saddle or stirrups, rose gracefully in the air and came down on his rump in the ditch with his hat over one eye.

Simon was on his feet first. Cloak and tunic were hanging in the tree above him, and one sandal was wedged somewhere in a crotch. He stood there in a pair of striped shorts and stated

his view of the situation in a mixture of a number of languages of his acquaintance.

This was unwise, because the youngster was equally annoyed. His spear was in two splinters, but he had drawn a two-foot double-edged sword and had every intention of sheathing it exactly where he had said he would, in Simon's liver.

A shout from up the road distracted him, as the rest of the troop came jogging over the near rise. It was all Simon needed. One spraddling hop and he had the boy's horse by the bridle. The road was narrow and the roadside rocky. Before the big stallion could make up his mind whether to bolt or rear, Simon was on his back and jabbing the heel of his remaining sandal into the brute's floating ribs. They took off down the road in their own little cloud, as the troop arrived from the opposite direction.

Fifth-century horses were trained to be ridden bareback, but nobody had trained Simon MacIvor to do the riding. He clamped down with his knees, buried his long nose in the horse's mane, and hung onto the bridle for dear life, instructing the horse at the top of his voice. That much abused creature took to the fields at the first bend. They plowed through a flock of sheep in the midst of a storm of terrified bleating, frenzied barking, and infuriated shouting. They went through a farmyard where pigs, geese, and children scattered screaming in all directions—down between shoulder-high clumps of vine—and over a stone wall into an olive grove where the horse did his best to scrape off his rider on the first low-hanging branch. Simon didn't scrape, but when the beast took a second wall with a column-left turn on the other side, the geologist kept right on going.

Five minutes later, burrowed as deep as he could get into a clump of brush, he watched the pursuit go by. His late assailant was riding double behind a youth as plump as he was skinny, and not enjoying it much. They'd be back once they caught the horse. As soon as the last rider was out of sight, Simon took off for the top of Mount Hymettus, keeping under cover of whatever scrub he could find.

Fortunately, Simon knew the mountain well. In another twenty-four hundred years he would be hiding from German patrols in the same network of seams and gullies on which he was now relying to keep the cavalry busy. And seven years later still, he would be scouting the same country for Point Four. Until, one afternoon, he'd gotten completely fed up with the crassness of the twentieth century and walked off his job. The placid hills around him, timeless, had overcome him with a vast longing for the peace and quiet of the Golden Age of long ago; he had remembered the belt MacManus had given him, remembered the instructions, remembered the explosion, which, for the first time he connected with MacManus and which had cost the U.S. a small chunk of territory, and decided what the hell, MacManus might not have been a crackpot, and anything is worth a try, once.

Presently, tucked into a surprisingly roomy hole under a limestone ledge, he added up the situation glumly. Athens was now out of the question—he had asked young Launcelot the way there, and they'd be posting double guards at the gates. Well—eastward lay Laurion, and Laurion's silver mines looked like the one place where his scientific training could be put to work to earn him a good living. Maybe whatever minor deity kept an eye on impetuous geologists in the Golden Age had grown a bit impatient and was giving him the deific goose toward his chosen occupation.

Simon had gotten into the whole mess indirectly as the result of some rather bad bar scotch, which, as the evening progressed, seemed to improve markedly in quality. He was in Washington, filling out papers as a minor member of a Point Four Mission to Greece, preparatory to sailing. He'd been a little slopped, and sounding off at the red tape, the ingrowing bureaucracy, the general dumb-headedness, and the automatic obstructionism of Big Government. This, he was making clear, was a Big World. Big Business—Big Labor—Big Literature—Big Theater—Big Music—Big Crime—and, by all means, Big Science. As an up-and-coming geologist in your later thirties, you were proffered the glad hand of Big Oil and sent out to find a Big Pool. Or you could go out with a Geiger counter

and a UV lamp and try to find enough uranium to assure that the Big Military would obliterate mankind before it learned to atomize the planet. Or you could do "research" on the faculty of some half-horse college too small to have any alumni or trustees on Wall Street.

What you earned was on the treasurer's books as a stipend, and it was as small as it sounded—before and after taxes. On the other hand, there were Traditions to be maintained, and they did not include living as cheaply as you were paid. Whenever you opened your mouth, in public or in private, you could feel the hot and eager breath of the DAR, the VFW, and the FBI on the back of your neck. It was not exactly safe to question the libretto of Genesis too openly.

At the other end of the bar, this night in Washington, was a burly, red-headed mick in a ratty Palm Beach suit who, it appeared, answered to the name of MacManus. G. Francis MacManus. A physicist with a knack for translating squiggles on paper into gadgets that did things. And MacManus had been in Washington trying to interest someone in an effect which he had first deduced, then produced, from a fringe relation in Milne's relativity. He had been frozen out of a meeting of the Triple-A-S. He had been unable to get into even the first shell of the Pentagon. He hadn't been able to see his Congressman—or anybody's Congressman—or, come right down to it, anybody.

Not even Drew Pearson. Not even the President.

Simon found that the scotch was definitely of first quality.

By midnight they had reached a high degree of unanimity. The world was shot all to hell. It had become a paradise for damn fools, bureaucrats, and unmitigated stinkers. (They were very smug about "unmitigated.") It was no place for decent citizens. There were reasons to doubt that there were any decent citizens (present company, and the bartender, excepted).

By one o'clock, they were willing to swear that the scotch was at least twenty-five years old and aged in the best sherry kegs this side of hell, to boot. And they wanted the good old days. They sang. This brought forth a number of other authorities who happened to be in the place at the time. Mac-

Manus wanted nothing more than his Old Granddaddy and the Dells of fair Wisconsin. An ex-diplomat from the State Department, in the process of being purged because the elevator operator in his apartment house had been seen with a copy of the *Daily Worker*, voiced a preference for the Gobi Desert. Simon, having a great love for Greece and a fair knowledge of its history, said that the Golden Age of Pericles was the only time. There was True Democracy. There was literature at its greatest—Great Tragedy springing from the hearts of the People—Great Comedy rooted in the honest filth of the market place. There, and there alone, had been an intellectual burgeoning never paralleled in this pesthole of ingrown mediocrity.

Simon believed it. And even the next day, even with a hangover—when he was trying to remember where he and MacManus had gone when they left the bar together—he still believed it.

On the ship across he found the belt, buried in the bottom of his suitcase. MacManus had insisted that he take it, he remembered hazily. It was a time machine of sorts, or supposed to be, and the government wasn't interested in it. According to MacManus it wasn't at all dangerous unless you removed the guard bands from the diamonds.

It was months later when Simon thought of it again, and by then MacManus had gone to his reward, presumably having removed one of the bands from one of the diamonds on the belt *he* had kept, perhaps to prove to a drinking acquaintance that the thing really *was* dangerous.

Simon had purchased the tunic and other clothes, the old coins, and the sandals, in the mood of a child playing "Let's Pretend." The twentieth century was too much for him, too much Bigness without a place for the Little Man. In boredom and hatred of what he had and what he was, lost and alone, MacManus' coils offered a possible physical substance to a daydream. Could one transmute the unhappy present into the alleged Golden Age that still lingered in the memory of man? Remembering MacManus, the scotch, and the New Jersey

explosion, he could almost convince himself, for a moment, that the belt might really work.

Nonetheless, he was surprised when it did.

When Simon crawled out of his cave and limped down the mountainside to the road, there was a half moon in the sky. He wished he had believed more fully in MacManus and grounded himself more thoroughly in ancient Greek customs, instead of entering into the affair in a slipshod and admittedly skeptical manner.

He went warily, diving into the ditch or behind a bush at every strange noise. Eventually he found the tree, looming on its hilltop where the lane plunged down to the Athenian plain. His *chiton* was gone, all but one three cornered rag spiked on a stub and barely big enough to cover his navel. His cloak was gone; his other sandal he found on the ground under the tree. And the hollow was empty!

No clothes. No money. No time-belt. But at least he was in the Golden Age!

Nobody spends a third of his life in the field without developing a certain resourcefulness. Nobody spends eight months with a band of Greek guerrillas without acquiring acquisitive ways. Down the road a piece was the farmyard through which the trooper's horse had carried him. Where there was a farm, there were farmers; where there were farmers, there were clothes. And, by whatever gods were still up, food!

Sundown of the following day found Simon MacIvor sprawled on his belly in a bed of ferns, nearly twenty-five miles from the scene of his late Waterloo. He was wearing a mangy sheepskin with a little of the wool still on it, and he still had the larger part of a huge hunk of rat-trap cheese. People who were never very far from starvation and nakedness themselves knew what hunger meant in a stranger, and the wrinkled old peasant who answered to the name of Chremes had welcomed him with open arms. And Chremes had had comments to make on the pack of young blue-bloods

who cantered around the countryside stirring up trouble for honest men.

When it came to that, Simon wasn't sure that he blamed the troopers for being leery of strangers. Particularly when he found out from Chremes that Thebes, Athens' ancient rival in the north, had started an insurrection and seized two of the chief towns in Boeotia, Orchomenos and Chaironea. A young general named Tolmides, who seemed to be acting as spokesman for the Knights, the Athenian nobility, was all for crushing the revolt before it got out of hand. Pericles, on the other hand, was just getting a huge public works program under way. Chremes had had a lot to say about that, too. It was all very well to honor the gods, but when it came to milking the taxpayers to feed a lot of idle stonemasons and long-haired sculptors, it was time to draw the line. Put 'em to work in the silver mines if they had to be fed—at least they'd be producing something tangible for their bread and oil!

The five-year truce which Kimon, the old admiral, had made with Sparta would be up in a few months. Spartan planning was behind the insurrection to the north. Spartan spies were being reported everywhere. No wonder the cavalry was out in force, patrolling every byway, questioning every stranger.

There across the valley lay Laurion, the treasury of Athens. The first silver ore was supposed to have been found there about forty years ago, just in time to finance the Greek end of the Persian war. The best part of the rich deposits should still be underground. With an experienced geologist on the ground, there should be wealth enough to keep Pericles, Tolmides, and both their parties happy for a long time to come.

The range of broken hills which ran northward along the coast from Cape Sunion toward Marathon had been reduced to a grav desert, rifted and tumbled and striped with crumbling bands of schist along whose contacts with the limestone the richest ore pockets lay. The trees had been cut for charcoal and fed into the smelters whose poisonous fumes had killed most of what vegetation was left. All that long day as he trudged down the long open ridges of Mount Hymettus, Simon watched the antlike figures of men and donkeys packing fuel



to the furnaces from the still-wooded mountains farther north.

As dusk closed in, the red glare of the smelters began to pick out the harsh contours of the hills. Around each was gathered a constellation of yellow cooking fires, and beyond them lay the Aegean, silver under the rising moon with its islands floating like silent ships.

Simon had made a workable mental map of the hillside before he rolled up in his unfragrant cloak and went to sleep.

He was awakened shortly after daybreak by three ravens who were trying to get up courage to find out whether he was as dead as he smelled.

He yawned and got up and nibbled the last of the cheese. Then he started off again.

Holding his pace to the weary slog which might be expected of a shepherd out on the trail of a lost sheep, Simon worked his way down into the valley and up the opposite ridge. From what he had been able to see, the biggest development in this part of the hills lay about three miles to the north, beyond a scattering of smaller workings. If what Chremes had told him was true, it was run by a solid citizen by the name of Kallias who had the reputation of being the richest man in Attika. Old "Money-in-the-hole," they called him behind his back. There was some story of his finding a buried treasure in the Persian camp at Marathon, but according to the old peasant, Laurion was the hole, and money was what Kallias—or his slaves—dug out of it. Even though the mines themselves belonged to the Athenian state, and were leased out for a short term at a fat fee plus a share in all silver mined, a smart operator with money behind him could roll up a fortune here, even as crude as the mining method was.

Golden Age or no Golden Age, Simon knew that he would have to work to keep body and soul together, and there was no better place than Laurion to start. Unless Big Business had changed in a couple of thousand years, Kallias would always be willing to listen to a way to add a drachma or two to his take. Simon was his man.

What was it Old Man Hastings had said—the boss of his first job in the field? "Go for the top, kid. They can't kick you

no farther'n the guy at the bottom." And Beneway, who had made and dropped more money in oil than the Rockefellers had kept: "You can always tell a two-bit operator, son. He's willing to wait."

So Simon reflected as he plodded along, and by noon he was in the middle of the mining area.

The shafts were everywhere, put down higgledy-piggledy wherever a prospector's know-how or some soothsayer's say-so had dictated. Simon was sure he'd make a big splash with his scientific surveys and predictions.

From the spoil heaps around him, he could judge how deep they'd gone and within limits what kind of stuff they'd struck. The holes weren't much better than man-sized rat holes, no more than four or five feet across, and Simon knew that the galleries below were even smaller. He'd been shown the lamps they used to time the shifts—lamps which burned for ten hours at a filling. Ten hours down there in the cold and the wet, crammed into a hole barely wide enough to clear your shoulders, hacking away with a hammer and a chisel: It was not a pleasant thought, so Simon tried not to think about it.

The ore came up in baskets, on the backs of some of the brawniest individuals Simon had seen. Maybe it was part of the scheme of the gods to let yourself be another man's chattel, but Simon smiled, for from what he had seen of Greeks of his own time, there were limits to how far the gods could push you.

Gangs of slaves, stark naked like the miners, squatted on their hunkers in the blazing sun picking over the heaps of ore that were dumped in front of them. Other teams were breaking up the bigger chunks in huge stone mortars. From them the higher grade ore went into a great crusher whose massive millstone was dragged around and around by other slaves chained to a long crossbeam.

A glimmer of hope that he might have been the unsung genius who introduced the ingenious separating tables at Laurion was snuffed out when Simon came in sight of a chain of the things. Water from covered cisterns farther up the hillside sluiced out over a huge slab of smoothly plastered stone

in which a meandering labyrinth of channels had been cut. As the powdered ore from the crushers was washed down over the stone, the heavier bits of lead and silver settled in shallow grooves cut in the bottom of the channels, while the lighter rock was washed on down. A slave with a dipper ladled the water out of a catch-basin at the bottom of the table and started it down again, while his partner dumped in new ore and thumbed out the slimy mass of concentrates from the rifles where they had collected.

The smelting furnaces squatted around in every open space, little stone beehives belching sulphur dioxide and assorted poisons, half buried in their dung heaps of slag. Nearby were lines of marl cupels in which the lead was burned out of the molten silver. There must be a hundred men there, working with the precision of an assembly line. What price General Motors? Simon thought. And for a moment he had the happy vision of U.A.W. contracts with benefits. But he shrugged, for after all, this was the Golden Age.

For initial questioning, Simon selected a man coming out of a squat stone building that looked to be the vault where their bullion was kept. The man was tall for a Greek of this century, his *chiton* spotless and draped around his waist in a YMCA wrap-around effect. His beard was trimmed to a neat point, still glossy black with a few gray hairs. He was certainly the manager of the place, and he might even be its owner. Simon hailed him: "*Chaire*, friend. Greetings."

The man looked him up and down with about as much expression as there was on the archaic statues Simon had seen in the Acropolis museum. "What's your business here, barbarian?" he asked coldly.

There it was again—first the youngster on the horse, then Chremes, and now this individual. Praise be that he hadn't been forced to try an Honest Old Shepherd act, if they could spot him this easily. "They call me Simon," he said. What was that nickname the guerrillas had given him when they couldn't get their tongues around "MacIvor"? It was Greek, at least, "Simon Machairos, a traveler from—uh—Syracuse."

"Simon-the-Knife. That has a Phoenician ring to it—yet from

your beard, or the lack of it, you might be a Macedonian or an Egyptian. As for that pretty clout you're wearing to conceal your manhood, that might make you a Persian or a Scythian. That foul accent might come from Thule or Ethiopia, or from the depths of Hades, but it's no more like the twang of Syracuse than an ass' bray."

Simon felt the blood rushing to his neck. "Syracuse is a city of wanderers," he countered, "as Athens is. If I speak your beautiful tongue crudely, it is because the home of my own people is beyond the Gates of Herakles, where few men of Hellas travel. But I have made Earth and her secrets my life's study, and I hoped that this knowledge might be useful here in Laurion."

"So you're a philosopher now, come to teach us our trade? Tell me, Simon-the-Philosopher, since you're so intimate with Mother Gaea—has she told you the same tales that she's whispered to that old fool, Anaxagoras? Are these hills truly dredged up out of the sea, and will they return there? And what of Apollo's chariot, the sun—is that but a cauldron of flaming silver such as we ladle out of our furnaces here at Laurion?"

"I know no secrets that men like yourself have not showed me," Simon said cautiously. "There, in the rock by your foot, where are such shells found except in the sea? Surely if the gods desired to make land of the sea, and set globes of fire in the sky, they could do so. This I do know—if you will let me, I can show you new veins of silver in these rocks which will make you the richest man in Athens."

The man's mouth hardened. "You've a slippery tongue, Simon-from-Nowhere; but I'll take no slurs from a barbarian!" He snorted. "You know as well as I that only a free-born citizen of Athens dare mine these hills, and as for wealth, my master, Kallias, is already richer than Croesus himself."

"Hylas! Manes! Take him!"

You damned fool, MacIvor! With that shaved head, the man is a slave—remember your history?—and he obviously hates it. Your talk of making *him* wealthy is like sandpapering a boil.

Two brawny overseers with whips answered the foreman's

shout. They came stalking in from two sides, running the thongs lovingly through their fingers. They looked as if they were used to handling trespassers and liked the job. Simon dropped his fleece and shuffled his feet slowly in search of better footing. He was a free man, and he didn't intend to be pushed around.

The taller of the two made the first mistake. As he lashed out with his whip, Simon grabbed at it, yanked hard, and had him by the forearm. Before the startled slave knew what had hit him, he was flying through the air. He landed with a thump as the second man came plunging in. Simon side-stepped and dropped him with a vicious chop at the neck. If geology wasn't paying off around here, maybe judo would!

And then the sky fell in on him. How many cops the foreman called in, Simon never knew. They came with fists and they came with clubs. He got his back to a wall and did what he could. Through the melee he could see old Frozen-face in his white sarong, directing operations with gentlemanly reserve. Then someone waded in with something that looked like a short crowbar, and the sun went out.

He came to in a forest of legs. There were clean legs and dirty legs, bronzed legs and reasonably white legs, bare feet and feet in a variety of sandals. And there were horses' legs—dozens of them. He shook his head until things began to stop whirling round, and looked up. There were men on the horses—the same troop of guards with whom he had had his first brush, from the look of them.

A tall man near Simon's own age was standing with the overseer: from his bronze greaves and high-crested helmet he was probably the officer in charge of the cadets. "Lamachos was the only one who had a close look at him," he was saying, "but from the description, I'd say this is the same man who stole his horse."

Simon wriggled up on one elbow. "Stole whose horse?" he demanded indignantly. "The young pup was trying to run a sword through my liver. It was get out or get killed. If it comes to stealing, where are my belt and my money? What

kind of country is this, where an honest traveler is robbed by the very people who should be protecting him?"

That didn't sit so well. "Get up," the officer snapped. "I have your money here, quite safe, and your clothes. Cover up that ridiculous striped diaper you're wearing with a decent *chiton*, and we'll give you a personal escort to Athens. From what Kapros here has been telling me, the People will want to know all about a stranger who comes snooping around their silver mines, full of obvious lies, at a time when the hills are full of Spartan spies and all Boeotia is up in arms."

"Watch him, master," the foreman warned. "If he were a Greek, he'd take every wreath in wrestling at the next Olympics. He threw these two lads of mine as if they were children."

Simon picked up the bundle of clothing which one of the *ephebi* had been carrying in front of him, and wriggled into his tunic. There was a three-cornered tear in it, where it had snagged on the tree, but he felt less naked with it on. "Is there a law against defending yourself when two brutes like these jump on you?" he asked. "All I did was offer to show this Kapros, if that's his name, how to find silver where his clumsy burrowing will never uncover it. Show me the man who owns this mine, and I'll make him the same offer."

The officer studied him thoroughly and thoughtfully. "And what do you know about silver and Laurion?" he asked.

"I'll talk to Kallias, if he's the owner. I've been through all that with this pig-headed fool. I'm not going to waste my time again."

"Will you talk to Hipponikos, son of Kallias?" the man said quietly. "I am he, as Kapros will tell you."

That worthy was wearing a very sour look, but what the officer said was obviously true. Come to think of it, it made perfectly good sense to have a member of the family policing the region. If someone like this smooth-talking Kapros thought of feathering his own nest, he would think twice when the boss' son was in the habit of dropping in at unexpected times.

"How about a test of what I claim?" Simon suggested. "Even Kapros seems to agree I'm a stranger here. Give me an

hour or two on the ground, and I'll tell you in which of these pits he's found silver, and in which he hasn't."

He'd had no time, either in 1951 or now, to make a proper field survey of the place, work out the dip and strike of the rocks, and go over their mine data to find out where they had found the highest concentrations of ore bodies. But he knew that the minerals were found along the interfaces between the strata of schist and the limestone, and from the tailings around each shaft he could get a pretty good idea whether it had been a dry hole or was still being worked.

"Try him, Master Hipponikos." Astonishingly, it was the foreman. "There is no magic in what he suggests—I could do as much myself—but if this Simon is indeed no bag of wind, but an honest philosopher who has studied the secrets of our trade, maybe he can be of use to me. Athens needs silver, now that Toemides will go against Thebes."

"What bargain have you in mind if you prove yourself, Simon of Syracuse?" Hipponikos inquired.

"No bargain. I'm a stranger here—a foreigner. I have a little money, now that you have so graciously retrieved it for me, but I will have to go on eating after that is gone. If I can work here at Laurion for you and your father, that is the work I know best. If the wages you offer seem fair, I will go on working. If I can do better elsewhere, I will go elsewhere."

"Spoken like a Greek!" Hipponikos chuckled. "Who will be master, then—you or Kapros?"

"In my country no man is another's master! Nor will I be here. I will find places where there is silver. Kapros is your manager. If he does not dig where I tell him, that is his affair—and yours. Not mine. But if he digs and finds no silver, that is your affair—and mine. Not his. Then I will be a philosopher without work."

Hipponikos clapped him warmly on the shoulder. "I like you, Simon-the-Knife. Make your test, and if Kallias and Kapros do not want you for a soothsayer, I do."

"One other thing first. Where is my belt?"

The cavalryman frowned. "Come, friend, don't start fresh trouble now. I'd say Lamachos is entitled to a trophy for the

trouble he's had chasing that horse you borrowed from him. Kapros will find you a girdle to keep your *chiton* at the fashionable length when you come to Athens."

"That's a special belt," Simon insisted. "It's been in my family a long time. It's very dangerous for the wrong person to meddle with it."

"You'll be telling us next that it's the Girdle of Hippolytel"

And why didn't you think of that, MacIvor? That they might have believed. He could see growing anger in the cavalryman's eyes, and he knew the issue, at least for the moment, was settled.

"If I know Lamachos, he'll go straight to the temple to offer it to Poseidon. He's a very pious young man, our Lamachos."

Hung in a temple the thing would at least not be lying around where someone could monkey with the crystals and blow himself and the belt to atoms. If it got to the temple, it would probably be as safe as anywhere. And if it didn't, Simon couldn't do anything about it at the moment. So he shrugged. He wasn't going anywhere, anyway. He was in the Golden Age. But for the safety of an unknown community of Greeks, he hoped that Lamachos came from a long line of very, very pious people. Women, too. "Let's go," he said resignedly.

The foreman supplied him with wax tablets and a stylus with which to scratch his notes. At least you didn't have to chisel them on a slab of marble, as the gag-writers back home always had it.

Both Kapros and Hipponikos, with a few of the older *epebe*i and Kapros' two shadows, Hylas and Manes, followed him up ridge and down gully while he made a sketch map of the place and drew in the lay of the rocks. There were a half-dozen spots where a shaft should strike pay dirt when it reached the interface and he told them so.

He came back feeling very well satisfied with himself. You're in, MacIvor, he thought. If you were a Greek, you'd be making a beeline to the nearest temple with a sacrifice—because the gods certainly are cranking that mill of theirs.

He smiled to himself. MacManus had said that the diamonds mightn't be completely accurate. But that hadn't both-



ered him at the time of departure because he really hadn't expected the time-belt to work anyway. He'd been lucky all around: first in hitting what he was aiming at, the Golden Age; and once there, in falling into, as it were, the job he knew best.

Six weeks later Simon found himself urging a flap-eared white mule up to the Thriasian gates of Athens.

Six weeks in the mines had bred a change of heart in him. Not that Kapros was so bad, once you got to know him, not that his muscle-bound bodyguards, Hylas and Manes—slow but willing judo pupils—weren't entertaining in their simple fashion. Not even did Simon mind, really, wrestling in the nude some of the young cavalrymen who dropped in for lessons, in the center of a cheering ring of equally naked individuals, most of whom were slaves—did not mind, that is, once he got over the chill, New England mores of his boyhood. What his dour aunts and unbending uncles, among whom he was raised, would have said could they have seen him, he could imagine.

Some of his objections to the mines were superficial: inefficiency, for instance. But others weren't. Bodyguards and whips and filth and slaves—well, Laurion ate slaves the way a lizard eats flies. There were no Big Unions and no arbitration; protest was synonymous with punishment. That, and more . . .

The job had been a good one. Kallias, himself, had come down to Laurion—he was an old man with a Cal Coolidge face and a Monty Woolley beard and eyes that saw silver in the blood of his slaves. Simon had made a deal for a hundred drachmae a month, cash, with two per cent of the take from the new shafts deposited with a banker named Archestratos, cash that now jingled in the bag at his belt. Around his neck he wore a lead disc with Kallias' seal and the words, "This is Simon," on it, which everyone assured him would provide all the identification he needed.

He smelled the agora before he saw it. It was an odor not much different from the markets of the Athens he knew, and of a good many other Eastern cities, compounded of fresh

bread and new onions, garlic and fish, spices and old metal, sweat and manure. It was a good deal sweeter than the crooked alleys he had seen opening off the great avenue which ran from the agora to the gates, dark, unpaved, and littered with the filth which respectable householders dumped out of their upstairs windows on the heads of passers-by. Kapros had taken a good deal of malicious delight in briefing him. He knew in what inns the fleas were least agile and the wenches most accommodating. He knew where to find the best cooks in Athens—they were from Syracuse of course, the foreman pointed out slyly—and whom you could trust to give you good workmanship in a pair of shoes. Simon's feet, having no naturally developed space between the toes for a sandal strap, had been taking a real beating in his scrambling over the hills of Laurion.

Simon left his mule with a stableman who recognized Kallias' seal and would therefore not sell the beast before he got back.

He let the crowd carry him down the Dromos with its square god-headed pillars lining both sides, and out into the agora. Straight ahead rose the rocky face of the Acropolis, the ancient citadel of the heroes and the gods, where Pericles was building a monument to Greek art which would last through all time. On his right, across the foot of the agora, extended the rocky hummock of the Areopagus—the Hill of Ares, on whose flat top the oldest of the Athenian courts held its sessions.

This was Athens. Not the pillared temples with their gaily painted carvings. Not the gray mass of the Acropolis with its memories of Theseus and the mythical Pelasgi. Not even the great open court of the Assembly on the slopes of the Pnyx. Here in the agora, the market place, the daily assembly hall of Demos—the People himself—was where Athens lived. Here was the true democracy he'd studied and dreamed about.

The whole center of the big square was filled with little booths—awnings, wicker sheds, open tables, baskets heaped on the open pavement. He remembered a crack Hylas had made

about going to Athens to pluck sweeter-smelling violets than he could find in Laurion.

Down the west side of the square ran the public buildings, from the imposing colonnade of the King-Archon's *stoa* and the temples of Zeus and Apollo, where the civic sacrifices were performed daily, to the buildings which housed the Athenian senate of five hundred, and the conical-roofed cylinder of the Tholos where the presidents of the Senate had their office. Other courts and offices lay behind them along the slopes of the Market Hill and at the foot of the Areopagus.

But it was the north and east that were alive! Here was a circle of wine vendors with bloated skins fresh from overseas and delicate, painted jars of domestic vintages. There were stacks of great cheeses, in another corner bundles of leeks, baskets of figs, trays heaped with all sorts of green stuff. The colonnades along the edges of the agora seemed to be semipermanent shops for barbers, perfumers, and weavers. Somewhere over there was the street of the shoemakers, where a namesake of his ran a shop frequented by the intelligentsia of Athens.

The open homosexuality of the mining camp had turned his stomach, and suddenly he noticed it here, too; only here it was worse, here it was in public, flagrant, and accepted. There were dozens of the gay lads, clean-shaven, their long hair oiled and curled, dressed in bright colors with flowers behind their ears or wreaths on their shining heads. They were prattling together in the perfumers' quarter, ogling each other over the flower sellers' booths, fingering the few fabrics in the weavers' stalls. Many of them had naked boys in tow, wreathed and painted as prettily as they, with little brightly colored birds perched on their shoulders. So this was the Golden Age? A minor doubt crept into Simon's mind.

A whiff of strong perfume and a husky "*Chaire!*" brought him about, face to face with a middle-aged dandy in bright blue, his hair and beard done up in tight ringlets, his cheeks rouged, and his eyelids darkened with some kind of mascara. Simon's knuckles itched. So this was the kind of violet you plucked in the agora!

"Simon," said the man in blue, plucking at Simon's tunic and reading the name on the disc. "What a rough name! And what a big, rough man who owns it. Don't you think Ariphrades is prettier? Doesn't it slip cunningly over the tongue—like the kiss of a pretty child?"

Simon's mouth was dry. The man before him became suddenly a symbol of the contradictions in this civilization of filth and beauty, slavery and deep, ingrained democracy. I suppose there are festering sores in any culture, he thought: you can try to cut them out, you can pretend they don't exist, or you can try to live with them. But twenty-four centuries from now Greeks like these will be fighting in their own hills and in the hills of Korea against a new brand of slavery. Even now, from what Kapros says, they don't like to enslave other Greeks.

"Where is Poseidon's temple?" he demanded.

The man sniffed delicately at the scent on the back of his hand. "And suppose I tell you, Simon-the-Rough, what reward for such service may a poor old man expect?" His eyes were hungry.

Simon grabbed the man's tunic. "Damn you, where is it!"

Suddenly trembling in terror, the man pointed across the agora.

Simon shoved him out of the way and strode across the agora in the direction he had pointed, shouldering startled people out of his path. There was a sour taste in his mouth. How can a man be fool enough to try to live in two times? he asked himself bitterly. You with your own values, bred into you, and they with theirs, built up through hundreds and thousands of years. You can't live here by your own code, and you can't change them. Only time can do that—and you've twisted the meaning out of time by being here at all! Let's face it, MacIvor; it was a gag, and it's kicked back at you. Get that belt, and get out of here!

Poseidon's temple was one of the oldest in Athens, down in the old part of the city between the Pnyx and the Areopagus. The whole district had been sacked by the Persians and only partly rebuilt. Small temples stood in ruins along the Sacred Way which had led to the old gates of the city; statues with

broken arms and chipped faces, the colors of their draperies faded and peeling, stood in niches along the tortuous old streets.

Simon stopped twice to ask his way.

Grubby, thin-faced children peered out of what seemed to be burrows under the heaps of rubble. If Pericles wanted to rebuild Athens, this was the place to spend his money, Simon thought—not on a showplace like the Parthenon. And yet these very people, bitterly poor as they were, would probably feel that the gods came first.

Enneakronos—"Nine Spouts"—the old spring of Kallirrhoe at the end of the Pnyx—seemed to be the center of the district. Some of the very few women Simon had seen abroad on the streets of Athens were in its colonnaded court, filling their jugs at the nine bronze lion-headed spouts. And across the Sacred Way stood the old temple of Poseidon.

Simon went thoughtfully up the steps to its porch of simple Doric columns. He suddenly seemed utterly alone. As an alien in Athens he could go on with his mining, own slaves, pay taxes—but he would have no share in the real good of this world, and the bad and ugly would be always before him. How trivial his griping at the complexities of his own time seemed now! Which of the slaves at Laurion, or here in the city, would not give his life to share in the freedom and dignity and hope of the world he had rejected? A horrid thought struck him: what if the belt were not here!

There was a great hole in the roof, through which the late morning sunlight streamed down into the sanctuary. There was no statue; if it had been bronze, the Persians had probably melted it down; if it had been marble, they had smashed it. There was a low altar of carved stone—and in front of it a bronze trident on which hung MacManus' belt!

But a priest stood between Simon and his goal. He was quite young—only a few years older than Lamachos and the other *ephebi*, well groomed and sleek. Simon knew from what Kapros had told him that these priests were members of some of Athens' first families. The posts were hereditary, like public offices.

"Simon from Kallias?" the priest said. "What brings you here?"

Simon was in no mood to argue. "The belt," he said. "I mean to take it. Step aside." All the frustration and disappointment, the feeling of utter isolation, which had built up in him in the last few hours, bubbled over.

"Not all Kallias' silver can buy you free of profaning the shrine of Poseidon. Every Knight in Athens will hunt you down, for the god is their patron."

The priest stood before the belt now, fingering it behind his back.

"Look out!" Simon warned. "There is a power in that belt which will make Zeus' thunderbolts look like one of Arphrades' love pats. It will leave this place in ruins. For the love of your god, give it to me while we're still alive!"

The priest had snatched the belt from the trident, and now he dropped it on the altar. To his mind, that was probably the greatest protection he could give it.

Then Simon realized what he was seeing. The belt was in full sunlight now—and the pockets which held the crystals were empty!

Simon saw red. "Where are the gems?" he demanded.

No answer from the priest, only a sneer.

Simon let his *himation* slide to the floor. He was getting used to the Greek habit of stripping for action, but a moment later the priest went all the way. As Simon grabbed at him, he whisked aside leaving his tunic in the geologist's hand, and dragged the huge, bronze trident out of its socket in the floor.

Warily eyeing the trident, Simon repeated his demand. "Where are the gems?"

Why didn't the fellow say something? Why didn't he talk? What was the matter with his face?

Into Simon's mind flashed a picture of the peasants he had seen on the road, the shoppers in the market place, carrying their coins in their cheeks. The man had put the crystals in his mouth!

He wondered if they had bull fighting in Greece. There was a trick that might work: knife fighters he'd seen with the

partisans used something like it. First the knife, He slid it out of its sheath. The priest would watch it like a hawk.

Then the cape. It was too late to go back for his cloak. He loosened the girdle Kapros had given him, let his *chiton* drop around his feet, and snatched it up with his left hand. Simon hoped the priest was not in his family tree.

Now he was ready. Direction—and misdirection. First the knife, a present from Kapros “to cut purses with,” as he said, and a weapon Simon had almost forgotten how to use. A darting feint with it threw a fillip of sunlight into the other man’s eyes. Then the cape, swirling white in the sun, drawing the priest’s attention from the fang of death. All the while, moving in, weaving aside. Feint—and sweep—and dance.

Don’t bite off a guard ring! Simon prayed to the priest.

*Hail*

At the shout, Simon leaped, swirling the tunic wildly. With a sweep, the trident came hurtling, driven by the force of two muscular arms, but not at him. At the *chiton*, drawn by its flare of white. At a phantom which tore and dropped the huge fork clanging on the floor. And Simon was on his man, both hands at his throat. If the priest should swallow those crystals!

It was ugly. Knee in the man’s belly, thumbs in the corners of his jaws. The old rage Simon knew when fighting man to man on a patrol with the partisans came back to him.

Then he had them—all three of them—and the guard rings were intact on the two that mattered!

Stepping over the priest’s squirming form, Simon snatched up the time-belt from the altar. If anything had happened to the circuits, it was too late to worry now.

The priest began to shout for guards. And a cry went up from outside the temple in answer.

The belt went around Simon’s waist. Get outside, MacIvor! Running, he thrust the crystals into place. This area may be twenty feet underground in 1951. Get out there on the Pnyx, on the bare rock that hasn’t changed in twenty thousand years, let alone twenty-four hundred.

Already, in answer to the alarm, there were horsemen coming down the street. And on foot, a half-dozen husky charac-

ters with peaked hats and ankle-length pants, carrying bows, who must be the Scythian police. This was Athens of the Golden Age. An arrow snicked against the pillar beside him.

He hurtled down the steps and raced toward the court of Kallirrhoe. He'd chance it in the street if he had to. As he recalled it, the street had been cleared in his time.

There were women at the spring who had been gossiping, filling their jugs, letting their hands dabble in the cool water. They scattered as he came toward them. He snatched up one of the big black pitchers with its graceful figures picked out in red. He should have some trophy to show for a visit to the Golden Age!

He cleared the end of the colonnade and went leaping up the narrow flight of steps which led to the spring itself, and the row of reservoirs it filled. Here was open rock; he scurried over it, and went scrambling up the hillside, in full view now of the crowd below. Another flight of arrows went clipping among the pebbles. Far enough, MacIvor!

He swung around to look down at them. There was Athens at his feet—the huddle of rooftops, the Areopagus so close he might almost touch it, and floating above it in the afternoon sun, the sheer rock of the Acropolis. There were little figures up there on the white rim of Kimon's new wall—people staring down down at him. Phidias, maybe. Iktinos and Kallikrates, the young architects who were building the Parthenon. Pericles himself come to check the progress of the job. And down in the cluttered ruin of the old agora, down by Kallirrhoe, by the Nine Spouts, there was some kind of excitement.

He saw an arrow coming, arching up from the street below, over the court of the nine bronze lions, over the reservoirs, over the bare rocks of the Pnyx. This might be the one.

He pressed down the switch.

It was the year of Our Lord 1895. A German by the name of Wilhelm Konrad Roentgen was discovering something he called X rays. Her Majesty Victoria Queen-Empress, and all the rest, was enjoying the best of health in the fifty-eighth year



of her reign and the seventy-fifth year of her life. All was at its best in the best of all possible worlds.

Several of Her Majesty's most loyal subjects, who were dutifully engaged in one of Mr. Cook's grandest tours, were visiting the Cultural Landmarks of Athens under the personal tutelage of a very, very nice young man from the embassy. The ladies were wearing stout shoes and carrying parasols; the gentlemen had straw hats and walking sticks. They were standing on the slopes of the little hill which the young man called the Pnyx, when an extremely male person, completely nude except for a scraggly beard, sandals, and a small leather belt, appeared quite suddenly in their midst. He was carrying a fifth-century Greek pitcher.

The older ladies fainted. The younger ladies screamed. The young man from the embassy turned white as a sheet. The gentlemen raised their sticks in defense of home and property.

Simon MacIvor took one horrified look at the world of his aunts and uncles. He turned pale—all over. "My God!" he said with feeling.

He dropped the pitcher, which went clattering down the rock and smashed in the streets below. He dug the spent crystal out of his belt and sent it spinning out over the city. He slipped the third and last one in place.

One extremely forward young woman later confided to her sister that the man in the beard had said "My God!" not once but twice before he vanished.

Simon MacIvor wanted very sincerely to go home.

## Gerald Heard B + M — PLANET 4

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*The recent spate of books, magazine articles, and eye-witness newspaper accounts of visits of the so-called "flying saucers" to the earth has given birth to a great deal of speculation about these mysterious travelers from neighboring planets or the outer spaces.*

*In his recent book, Is Another World Watching? Gerald Heard envisioned a race of giant bees from Mars as the occupants of these shining discs. Here, warmly, humorously, philosophically, a brilliant writer expounds this fascinating theme in short fiction form.*

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**H**E FELT A SLIGHT SHUDDER. Somehow it was reassuring. In a way he'd expected it, thought it ought to happen, at least if everything had gone all right. And of course everything had gone "on course." He'd been "on course" all the time. And now time was up and he was "there"—or, rather, "here," as it was now. But, still in spite of the dependability of everything, in spite of the more-than-clockwork working of the whole plan and process, gear and gyroscope, the animal in him felt a sudden relief at the slight "jar." The brain in him knew precisely how and whereby and how long he'd been on the way. And so the brain knew by the clocks that now he must be there, now he must be in the new "here," in the place that really couldn't be "really real," as children wisely say, till "there" turns into "here." But the nonbrain, the big-majority rest of him—puffing lungs, squelching heart, the slowly turning snake-bag of viscera, not to speak of kidneys and their little riders, the

suprarenals, interstitials, thyroid, pituitary—all this big emotional crew shut up under hatches inside him—they couldn't read instruments, still less make "deduced reckonings." And for the last week, of course, it had all been a matter of "de'd reckoning" as the old sea navigators used to put it.

And now came that small reassuring shake, that sudden slight but unmistakable grating. He was actually, literally "in touch" again and now the touch, the direct-physical touch was with "there." "That," he repeated as he sat still at the still controls, his unseeing eyes no longer taking in the no longer quivering guiding "hands" of the instruments, "that gives the only real finishing touch. Seeing is believing but feeling is knowing." That floating feeling that you have when you are out and away in your own private magnetic field, that feeling of more-than-womblike buoyancy which is such fun for the first plunge, has about it its own inimitable nausea. Space sickness is as real and even more ghastly than sea vomiting. As an old moon-coaster once said to him when he was a raw cadet, "You don't bring up your guts. You wish you could. It's your adult mind, your sane stomach of common sense that gets vomited when you've turned yourself back into a super-fetus." That sounded just like an old tar's silly attempt to grill a young sprat. Now he knew. The old quote came to his lips: "He jests at scars who never felt a wound."

Well he'd better take stock, take his direct bearings. Now was the time. This was zero minute. The deduced reckonings had done all they could, their best. They'd brought him to magnetic zero as they'd been timed to do. That was all they could do. And now he must take over himself, he must take it on his bare skin, as they used to say in the endurance test classes.

Of course there had to be that moment, this moment, this sudden step, this jerk from deduction to sensation. Queer, the odd little limitations that still stuck out in the path of science progress, like ugly wrecking rocks in a harbor fairway, which even the full tide can't flood and sink. You could skitter about in space now like his grandfather's speedboats used to skitter over the ocean surface. But queer, perverse paradox! If you

were to see you couldn't go: if you were to go you mustn't see! The men with the telescopes could map a planet but never reach it. If you were to reach it you must fly blind. Not have a glimpse till you were landed for a close-up. Odd stubbornness of Nature! In spite of fortunes spent in trying to make glass for a space ship, no one ever had—no one had even made a "vitric" that would even serve at "take-off" speeds. And it wasn't the air friction. Then you could have hooded your glasses till you were out of the air and then opened up. No it was something to do with the speed itself. The magnetic "whirl" maybe affected the vitreous molecules as sunlight darkened, making purplish the old manganese-treated glass.

So that was Reason No. 1 why no one had yet come out here where he now sat. It was of course also Reason No. 1 why he felt that irrational and so all the more intense relief when he felt the slight joggle. He had arrived. Emotional relief, after that momentary gulp, was ordered back to its animal levels. Now he must switch to rational remembering. The guidance panel was of course dead. That was right, correct. That showed they were at zero—i.e., arrived, i.e., had made, contacted, were at rest in another field, the new field of reference, the field at which he and his flying projectile, his instrument-sensed metal body had been aimed, in which, as it somnambulated across space, soundlessly (and for the most of the time invisibly) he had been its embryo until his metal womb, having finished its days of gestation, delivered him, gave birth to him in this new habitat. Like a migrating bird it had borne him across desolation to this otherwise inaccessible hatchery. And now it was ready to lay him. Well he must be born, he must bear himself. He flicked open the little panel to the right of the main switchboard. On the dials a half-dozen little hands and fingers waved a welcome to him. They were clearly full of excitement. And, a further glance showed, of encouragement. Temperature first. F. 62! Couldn't be better. That was optimum expectation. "Opts": he pressed the button to his left that recorded the reading in his log and also shot back the message home—incoming home of course was dead in order to give him full return-wave. Atmosphere? Well he'd

betted, taking time of year (nice old phrase) and latitude, one might hope for something almost like the sixties for warmth. But atmosphere? He scanned the dancing needles again. Would he have to signal and log t.g.t.b.t.—too good to be true! Well, the needles evidently had no doubt in their minds or at their antennae ends: nitrogen 4 to oxygen 1. They were so precisely assured that they went on to tell him that argon was one per cent and carbon dioxide was .05. Why this was dear old earth almost over again! He didn't need to read gravitation pull. He could of course now feel it. He felt a little heavier than he had expected he would. He then checked up on that little "clock." It confirmed his surprise. The pull, the clock said, was as big as it felt, a good bit more than had been calculated. Well here were two big enough surprise finds for those at home. His left hand punched the button keys. Cluck cluck, they accepted the rich odd evidence like hens being given corn. U.V. radiations next and another surprise—not more than at home. Well "His not to question why." He finger-punched again this record. He opened and closed the small valve cocks that collected the "air" outside. The temperature and U.V. radiation had already been automatically recorded on the "robot log." And now he looked round where hung his "diver's suit" in which he was to attempt to make his raid "to collect samples and specimens."

He hesitated a moment and looked down again at the dancing dials at his right: smiled then, as his left hand punched "Am opening hatch" and his right pressed the lever. The side of his cabin yawned like a mouth. A mild, scented air floated round him. A gentle amber light filled his cell, streaming in from outside. For a moment he thought his eyes might be affected. Was he really at landing level? He was looking out across a wide golden-tinted field that stretched to a dense forest of what surely were oaks in early autumn foliage. The field was the lovely lively color of oat acres almost ripe for cutting. Then glancing out over the lip of his portway he saw the golden grass come right up to his ship's side. He had mistaken the scale in the misty glow. He swung his legs over the sill and felt the grass under his feet, stood up outside, saw the

broad weal made by his craft as it had swung down to where it now rested. He patted it with his hand. Then bent and patted the lawn. It was stiff as the pile of a giant velvet, as stiff as a hair brush. His feet made a crunching sound on it—"as though one were treading on sugar" he said to himself as his hand rose automatically to his nose. His fingers smelt strongly now of the scent he had noticed directly when he breathed his first breath of this "air." The smell came from a slight stickiness on his finger tips. Involuntarily he lowered them to his lips. "Surely sugar!" He bent again to look at the grass. Each little spine was tipped with a crystalline drop. "I'll christen it Candy Country!" he laughed.

Starting out across the crunching sugar grass he soon found there was nothing wrong with his eyes. He looked back to gauge his distance. He could see his footprints leading back to the craft clear as one used to see them when he ran out over the lawn at home as a boy in the morning after heavy dew fell. But here, in less than one hundred paces, he had reached the oak forest. That was the first time he felt eerie. Till then the whole thing had been an almost too simple, a too-reassuring very small boy's fairy dream of a candy country. But now. He stood looking down on the forest. The trees were gnarled and tangled but though they looked like ancient forest kings the tallest only reached up to his waist. He examined these midget oaks. Was the whole place a puppet paradise, a doll's dreamland? No, obviously they weren't oaks. They weren't true trees at all. Where had he seen anything like them? He remembered. They were like the giant succulents he'd seen in South Africa. The thick stems, the leaves so stout, so fat, they looked as though they were leaves carved from steatite. "Of course," he said handling a stiff, gorged sprig, "moisture storage is the game of life here." The brittle stem broke off in his fingers. A thick white sap oozed. It also smelled sweetly, a heavier scent than the sugar grass gave. Some of the viscid stuff was on his thumb. He tasted it too. "If cocoanut milk set and gave cream, this would be it," he chuckled. "Jerusalem the golden with milk and honey blest." The old hymn hummed itself in his mind. "Well the Biblical

forecast was nearer the mark than we imagined." "O fair and blessed country that eager hearts expect," another line of old St. Bernard's dream poem of the next world again bubbled up in his memory. "Seems to have been uncannily close to the mark but who would have expected—!" A sudden noise came in the stillness. He swung round just in time to see the port of his craft closing. He turned to run to it. Before he could take two steps the craft swung into the air and was gone.

"Jerusalem," he gasped, "what a fool I was to go out and not tell them I was going! The home base has remote-controlled the ship home. They think I'm inside slumped at the wheel." He looked round at the still stiff golden rich landscape. No life but vegetable life. The vegetation silently manufacturing vegetable milk and vegetable honey. "Gosh," he said. "Heaven's no exchange for home. What a horrible joke. Of course they'll send back the ship manned as soon as they see it's empty. But what chance they'll find me! When the night comes on I'll freeze for sure. One night and I'll only be fit for cold storage. These shrubs I guess have to stand awful low temperatures in that hell-of-a-long dark." For the first time he looked up at the sky. He'd thought it would be violet blue. It was much paler than he expected, with some faint flamingo feather flakings on it. And the sun was larger too. A golden amiable globe with gentle warmth—not the rather sad little orange he'd thought would be there. But the whole place was so still, its mild serenity became a kind of torment. It's nice to have complete dark and silence if you want to sleep. Quite the contrary if you are buried alive. To have a whole planet for your own casket doesn't make it any less a coffin.

"Well, I'd better keep my strength up." The sinking in his stomach food might ease. He broke a whole branch off one of the huge succulent subtrees and sucked the latex, thick as clotted cream, with which it was full. As he swallowed once he thought he heard a twang in the air. Looking round, though, nothing seemed to have moved. After biting into the bark of the limb—which was like a rather bitter crust of rough rye bread—he sat quiet for a moment scanning the

sky. Would it be worth taking off his clothes and spreading them over the bushes to catch the returning ship's attention? Slim hope! But he got up just to pretend he was doing something to improve his chances. Once more, and this time he was sure, he heard on the dead still air that twang. Still nothing. Then examining the nearest bush to see how best to spread his coat over it he saw one of its stiff branches was vibrating slightly. A large fruit—no, a large metallic object—depended from the sprig. Then the iridescent lump moved. It was a huge insect some eight inches in length and more than a couple in breadth. It was crawling up the bush. On reaching the top it was facing him—whether its huge faceted eyes were looking at him was hard to be sure. Anyhow it was clear the creature was formidable. One sting from its hypodermic and if he ever went back to earth it would be a mortician's job. He darted back therefore when with the twang of a bowstring the hyperhornet leaped into the air. But then it hung quite still some six feet from his nose. A moment more and it swung round lunging away from him; but always returning to its air station facing him. It did this more than a dozen times before he made any reaction. Then muttering, "Well, bees don't eat flesh and at the worst being stung to death is quick," he made a move toward it. At once it swung away ahead of him. But slowly, and he couldn't help smiling as the insect wheeled round time and again to see if he was keeping up. The creature must be guiding him. It was taking a route that led through the dense brush of succulents. After half a mile or so the bushes stopped abruptly. He had come to a broad belt of some smooth polished pale material, perhaps white larva. It seemed about a mile across. But left and right this band went straight to either horizon. His guide swung right. After walking perhaps half a mile alongside this great natural causeway he stopped. The monotony of the causeway on his left and the brush on his right was broken. By two objects. Each startled him, one by familiarity, the other by its oddness. The one was his craft lying, its hatch invitingly open. The other (he could have no more doubt of it than of his machine), a giant hive. It only



rose forty feet but it must have covered a couple of acres. Its wax gleamed like alabaster in the afternoon light. And of course it was aswarm with superbees, akin to his guide. He'd been an engineer all his life and life today on earth was inevitably superspecialized. So outside his engineering he didn't know much. But now he did remember once hearing some entomologists (bug boys they called them at school) discussing insects. And one had talked of an Austrian bee researcher called Von Frisch who was said to have found that bees talk. It sounded utterly phony. But now—? His leader buzzed quietly ahead. At this dawdle it emitted a somnolent hum. As they approached the hyperhive, none of the swarming workers even raised an antenna. He was led right up to the smooth wax wall. There a special detachment was hard at work. He saw at once what the project was. With amazing speed—it was already half finished—a supercell—a sort of wax sleeping sack—was being constructed.

He gazed with dismay. For another awkward boyhood memory had come to aid his growing distress. He recalled a Rider Haggard story of a lover of Cleopatra who with economical hierophantic hygiene had been suffocated and enshrouded all in one movement by being wrapped in a cerecloth and so put away in a pyramid for good. He drew back, glancing apprehensively at his guide. Then he saw the workers had stopped—dead still. And simultaneously his guide swung away from the hive—toward his craft! The bee hovered by its door. Trap or invitation, he'd make a dash for it! He was in, and the door snapped to, as quick as a fox-chased rabbit. His hand was on the lever to switch in o.m.f.—own-magnetic-field. Then there'd be that lift, lightness, out-of-this-worldness, and then, next thing, our world, dear old earth. And he'd report. And then! No: he couldn't. He'd just be slated schizoid. And he wouldn't be the first. Plenty of boys went that way. Sent out on missions they went schizy—went "womby," was the real slang. Just hung up like hibernating bats, out in space, on their neutralized ships. Lay up like ferrets which, sent down, stayed down. Then after their salary had accumulated enough, came back and spun phony

tales. It was easy enough to be tempting. All you had to do was to take a slight overdose of space sedative—"6." It was called in space slang S.A.—suspended animation. You came back fine with an appetite like a springtime bear and cash in hand! It was punishable of course and the sentences had mounted. Now you could get not merely a thyroid punch which made you immune to S.A. and some said gave you insomnia for good, you might get the castration clause. The authorities were alarmed. "Space Succession" would be a capital crime soon. He was a picked man for this super assignment. If he cracked, if they thought he'd cracked, they sure would crack down hard.

Instead of pressing o.m.f. he punched the door lever. It gaped again. Right in the center of his view hung his guide on perfect wing-hover. He tried a gesture. They must understand! Who else had flown the craft from his alighting spot here? He waved with his hand pointing to himself. There was a "ping" and on his knee the creature was settled. The rest went fast. He found some solar system chart paper. It literally pounced on the sheet. Planet 3. It tapped his home base with its head and then did the same with Planet 4. Yes, these insects were informed. No doubt. Then it bowed—a series of small bobbing bows. He remembered, too, hearing that about earth bees—they bow to the queen. "Manners go beyond man. Bees believe in behavior" he smiled to himself and bowed too. The M.C. bee flashed out and was back, backed by a swarm. Yes they were offering him honey and milk. He took it, offered in small wax cups. "Maybe that means having eaten their sugar I'm safe."

As the light dimmed and air chilled he shut the door again. On waking and opening his metal side lid he found the hive alive round him. But no one was inquisitive. At last one hovered by his open door. It might be yesterday's guide. But he hardly tried to detect. For his attention was riveted by the creature above which the guide hovered. For it was janitoring a nonflying visitor and that visitor was no bee, no insect. It was a—humanoid! Some two feet high it was perfectly formed, perfectly upright. It had no clothes but you couldn't

say it was naked. Its golden brown body was covered with a glossy brown down. It bowed and came forward. He put out his arm to help it in. It sat on his forearm as he lifted it over the door ledge as we sit in a swing. Then it spoke in the high ululating tone of gibbon chatter. First he thought it was just yodeling. Then he caught words—words he thought he knew. He corrected these. It was uncannily quick in getting the accent. Meanwhile its bee keeper sat on the doorsill, its head cocked. Somehow it managed to give, through its visored face, a sense of active concern. The progress was oddly fast. Clearly this monster bee, plus midget mannikin, this odd team knew what it wanted to know—and to tell.

By the time refreshments were served which his hosts shared with him he had the following points: This was an insect world—no doubt of it. Sugar was their wealth, health, and happiness. They were monarch of all they surveyed: and man? They'd derived a sugar grass—a midget sugar cane. They'd derived a supersugar succulent. He knew that too. Pure energy and vitamins, and starch and minerals and protein for their less digestively efficient junior partner? But how—? The imp interpreter looked coy. "We eavesdrop a bit," it said with a puckish smile. "You probably have guessed we can E.S.P. quite a lot. Our bee partners," he flicked a look at the earth pilot's first guide which—or who—was seated on their guest's other knee, "they've always had E.S.P. and never dropped it. We let it slip. And you're in a sort of dark age as far as real psychology's concerned. It's hard really to know when you *are* wire tapping when there're no wires," it added apologetically. "And we only listen in for safety's sake. Sun circles ago—I mean years ago—I listened in to (short wave helped out by E.S.P.) a conference of your astronomers. A very intelligent Dr. Menzel told them he thought we had, at what he called some sixty miles high, a CO<sup>2</sup> cloud, and the air up there is as hot as water when it boils with you. Of course he was right. But he didn't naturally see all that meant. For one thing surface temperature day and night here is milder, you've found, than you feared. Of course CO<sup>2</sup> does the trick." "Of course," replied the earth pilot. "It's a heat catcher and storer." "And

we can control it," went on the master midget. "You see this is a world of triple cooperation." "You mean?" "Vegetables, bees, and us." The puppet on his lap patted him as a fellow member of the third party. "You see—vegetables and bees naturally help each other on. And when the bees added us to the board of world management—the rest was easy. Yes," he allowed, glancing at the occupant of his other knee, "I guess bees here (and so the vegetables) are geologically aeons ahead of ours. And with us our bees and flowers have, I've been told, done a lot of mutual progressing." "But, but you?" "Well," the little fellow put its little-finger-big-hand into the cup of his huge fist, tickling his palm, "you know we're optimum size." It laughed like a cricket. "Once you have to handle machines, that club hand of yours is clumsy. I've studied your 'ascent' as you call it. For of course by race I can't help being most interested in you." He chuckled at its unconscious patronage. "Of course, you're decadent. Giantism's a race disease. But curable, thank your stars—especially the one you call Mars!" "Well, in where I live," he rallied back, "we've got the bees in their place. No one disputes we're tops on earth." "That's your trouble!" it crowed back. "That's why you're in such a mess now with the International Underground just ready to overthrow the too poorly World Fed. That's why—" This of course was treason. Maybe food and the Fed (as the world state was still called for courtesy) were not distributing as they should. But criticism meant naturally decraning—the modern death sentence. Sad but of course anything was better than Libanarchy, Demdemonism.

But he didn't have to interrupt. His left knee's occupant signaled to his right's. The dwarf ran on. "You've been hypertrophying for some six million of your sun cycles. All you humanoids did it—gorillas chose muscle. You're not so muscle-bound"—it prodded his biceps, of which he was secretly not too proud. "But your minds are worse." "Worse than a gorilla's?" his laugh was sharp. "Well at least they haven't lost their diet sense! You cannibal nearly every flesh you can lay hands on. You kill your bees as though they were only sugar machines—" Again he felt the warning stir on his left knee and

the indignant vibration on his right stopped. He *was* finding the lecture irritating.

"What's that runway out there?" he pointed to the smooth band that ran not a hundred yards from where they sat, alongside which his guide had brought him the day before. The little thing was all smiles again. "That and our control of our CO<sup>2</sup> high-sky-cover make our two climate thermostats. The high-sky-cover magnifies the sun's disc. And you see, as we've cooperated with the vegetables; they've helped too." "How, how could they?" "Why obviously. We let them evolve instead of simply exploiting them. When we animals and they started together we cooperated. In your world as in ours they do a lot more than merely give us food. We would suffocate far sooner than starve if they didn't help us. And these plants of ours, so much more highly evolved and bred than yours, they manage the oxygen-CO<sup>2</sup> balance for us. They are always aiding our oxygen." "But why haven't our spectro-analysts found it in this atmosphere of yours then?" "First because we can 'hood' it under our CO<sup>2</sup> tent of upper atmosphere. Second because the real density of oxygen hangs just above our sugar grass and sugar shrubs. You'd find yourself gasping pretty quick out in our desert regions." "But your CO<sup>2</sup> 'tent.' How does it hold together?" "It would be hard for you to understand. Look there." It swiveled on his knee, pointing out to the low eastern sky through the cabin door. He followed the slender signpost. A tinted ivory ball was cruising down sky to the horizon. "That's Phobos, your inner crank moon setting in the east?" he questioned. It nodded. "And it's so close," the dwarf added, "and so goes so fast it somehow makes an extra magnetic field that holds down our CO<sup>2</sup> covering. But all that cover wouldn't keep us warm without those." It pointed to the vast smooth runway that lay beside. "These huge avenues are really heating units. This is a small one, a sideline. At points they intersect across our earth's surface." He knew that, but not the next. "There we have shafts that tap the deep heat. You used to think they were water ducts. They are heat-distributing canals. Besides they also aid distribution of magnetic impulses. The bees when on them can

fly without exertion. You see," it nodded its head at its companion, "the bees here are so armored they can fly so fast you can't see them." He remembered the sudden twangs he'd heard when he first arrived. So he had been watched by sentries too quick to be seen.

His curiosity, however, not unnaturally began to buzz back and round his queer little-scale model of himself perched on his kneecap. "You say you're optimum size and we're hypertrophies. How did you happen to avoid our whopping mistake?" "We didn't! Oh yes, we blew up, didn't we just!" "I thought that we'd been told that if there were humanoids on this planet they would be huge because there's so little gravitation to pull down beanstalks." "You bet we were full of beans and beastliness. Then we saw that was the dinosaur disaster—oh yes, we've got their fossils here of our sort as you have yours. Now we spend that energy in vitality." "Where are your houses?" "Oh the bees have their hives. You see one there. Their great biological invention was multiple queens." He remembered that he'd heard the Argentine ant beat all the other ants just because it made that invention. "One biological invention, why, that's worth a million mechanical!" "Hum, hum, you don't seem to have many machines." "We did once, now only for space travel." "But *your* houses." "We don't need them. The bees are born republicans, conservatives, so they carry on the old way." "But you must live in something. A burrow?" "But you see we have got rid of clothes so why the clumsier clothes of roofs and walls?" "But you can't stay out all day and night!" "Why, it never rains here. All water is underground. Besides, our evolution's so ahead of yours that our body fluids are as different from yours as yours from a beast. Our vital liquids are much more like oil than water. Our diet is drink and food in one." He then noted that even *he* hadn't been thirsty, although he'd not had a real drink since landing. "Besides," the athletic baby went on, "this atmosphere doesn't dehydrate. Out on the deserts you'd soon be desiccated. But here one doesn't evaporate." "But your *houses!*" He was determined to get to the bottom of this. "We haven't any! No clothes. no houses. We have

streamlined life. Our immense vitality allowed us to relieve ourselves of those silly suffocating sheets. Once we lived in burrows, then caves, then built artificial caves, and now at last we're out and we're not going back. We reduced ourselves to the right optimum size. When you're, or your descendants, back to that, you'll find that you won't have to coddle yourselves. You can keep warm wherever you are." He had always looked upon himself as an athlete. He was. It was daunting to be treated as a mollicoddle by this doll. "I suppose that kind of high-pressure life wears you out soon?" He deliberately put some patronage into his tone. "Oh," it looked casually out across the landscape as if a little bored, "I live in this larval form about five hundred of your sun cycles." All he could think to say in reply to that was, "And then?" "You wouldn't understand," it said. That was "mate." He started the game again with, "But you have to sleep anyway." "Oh, we curl up and change consciousness—change focus now and then," it remarked with evasive casualness. Certainly the little fellow had him out of his depth and he'd better wade back to the present and his immediate future. Besides, perhaps it wasn't lying, perhaps this was the truth, perhaps this was the way out, perhaps here life had, after all the blundering and beating of its head against circumstances and disease and its own mistakes, managed to get through.

Suddenly he saw it as a whole—this ordered, amiable triple-partnered world, with its genial atmosphere, perfectly three-balanced living, lovely as a harmonic chord, suddenly he saw it was the solution. Man-insect-plant—that was the formula. It was a conversion experience. All the criticism of his own lot was right. Yes, he'd be—he must be a missionary. His small friend had said it wasn't too late for monster man on Planet 3. He'd go back. He'd make them understand. We were really wrecking our New World plan. We were, at best, unbalanced, always out for ourselves, always cocksure, overbearing. We were top-heavy. Had no right roots, no respect for Life, no insight. "I want to go back and tell the world, my world," he said. The puppet crowed and patted his neck. He didn't resent it. All he wanted was leave to return and tell,

tell the good news. But again his left knee acted as silent censor. The man on his right (whom he was already beginning to look on as man the-right-size, and himself the overgrown, wrong) was watching the bee on his left. It bowed to him, then fixed his little fellow with its gaze for perhaps five seconds. Then it bowed again and with a "ping" was gone. "You see," went on his companion as though he'd not asked an urgent question. "I'm neither parasite nor slave, I'm nature's real aim, or a key part of it. I'm a symbiont. The vegetables, bees, and us make a single threefold life. But we can't stop here. That too would be frustration." "You'll let me go then?" he broke in. "You couldn't do it, you know." Its voice wasn't superior. In spite of its piccolo quality it was gentle. And alas it carried conviction. He suddenly saw the return-inspection board. His story, his excitement. Oh they weren't bad fellows. If he went on he'd become one of them in time. But they had to keep things going, keep things quiet. "Lawnorder"—that fused word for security. They'd have him amnesically treated at the very least the moment he left the examination room—all the more if they suspected it might possibly, just possibly, be true.

"Don't get depressed." The model was really rather a pet but what was the use of comfort. He couldn't stay here. He couldn't go back. But then, in quite matter-of-fact tones, it went on. "It wasn't chance you got through when so many failed. We saw they wouldn't serve so we just made their instruments go haywire, as you call it—boomeranged would be more exact. So they found themselves, when their dials showed 'arrived,' back at earth." He knew that was true—one of the many important never-published truths. "Indeed, that's been part of my job," it said with a certain pleased composure. So he had been picked and maybe by this queer model. He felt a further kinship with it. "If it wasn't chance?" he began to question. The creature raised its hand. Together they listened. Yes, outside a rising note could be heard. In some fifteen seconds it had risen to a high hum that was almost unbearably shrill. Then suddenly it stopped. The mannikin hopped off his knee and agilely swung itself on to the lip



threshold of his ship's port door. It was looking up. He craned his neck out and looked up too. The whole arch of the pale blue sky was dotted over its entire surface from horizon to horizon with bright flakes. Like an arrested snowstorm they shone in the sunlight. Then with a swoop they came to earth. A number landed near him. They were each about twelve feet across. They flipped open like giant pearl-white clams. Out of each came six of the superbees and one midget man. "That's your guide," his friend obligingly pointed out a bee which, hovering a moment, alighted just by his door. "Come along," the midget called and leaped down to the ground.

He followed his two companions through the orderly bustle. They paused out on the huge smooth tract of the thermo-duct—you could just feel the gentle warmth through the soles of your feet. It went (a mile or more in breadth) straight from horizon to horizon and now it was covered—its great polished fairway as though white petals had been strewn densely all over it to welcome a victor. His two "familiar" turned back. His small copy or exemplar squeaked up at him and he raised it to the crook of his arm. "That was just to show you we have enough. That's part of the planned flotilla—about one sixth of it to be exact. And now all's ready. If you'll put me down and get into your equipage, I'll get into mine. When I give you the signal you'll hear it on your instrument; put yourself into magnetic float, for the rest leave it to us." "But, but," he hesitated, "is this invasion? You know, but perhaps you don't, we humans, we're not bad really. But we do get easily alarmed. And then—" "Friend," it was the first time the mannikin had used a title for him, "I told you we planned this. You too confided in me that you wished to help—would in fact risk anything to help. Now trust us." A bag of bees and a doll he could crush like an egg just by inadvertently sitting on it—trust! But well, trust meant just that, didn't it! He'd always wanted adventure and wanted to do something that would count. Here surely was the chance, if ever. "Count on me, friend," he said, put down the living doll with something almost like a caress, crept into his ship, and switched down its door. He sat in silence a minute his

head whirling, his heart thumping like that old gadget, the piston.

Then he heard clearly—"All ready? It's zero, friend." "Okay, friend," he called back. "Into magnetic float then," the voice piped back. He swung the switch, felt the indescribably unique out-of-this-world sensation. "It's Ho for heaven," he joked across. "Well, Ho for a shot at heaven on earth," chuckled his unseen new friend. Then for a time he sat silent watching his dials. Lap after lap the fingers ticked off, undoing, hundred thousand by hundred thousand, the fifty million odd miles he'd run out from Planet 3 to Planet 4. After the excitement of this sudden dash back, his mind began to cool and question. Oughtn't they have spoken home, broken the news, parleyed a bit. Of course they had rushed him. He'd been emotionally off guard. That air—that food—how could his reactions have been normal? Relief at not being eaten, enslaved, or wax-walled in a superhive had driven him to an unbalanced euphoria. "Yes," suddenly spoke a small piping voice in the cabin. "Thought I'd let the question come from you. We've been contacting Planet 3 some time now. They still think it's some ruse of what they call the Underground. But we are assuring them we're completely above board and have nothing to do with anything underhanded. They've asked us then to produce you, as we said we were bringing you home. Your wave is now running. Will you speak?" He gave his name and number. He heard his base control, old Jackson, his voice quavering with query. "Is that you, is that you?" Jackson had always been fond of him and he knew didn't like his having this assignment, though it was an honor. After an exchange or two Jackson evidently was convinced. "Well, well," he panted down his nose, "and now I must tell you, young man. They've agreed to a landing. Can't say more. Guess you'll guess what's back of it. If you don't you won't have to wait long." He didn't. The moment Jackson was cut, in cut his midget. "We timed it well," it remarked with some not unnatural complacency. "We thought that when you were in danger of being forced off your base you'd take any aid, however outside, to keep you in the saddle. Here, listen to

what your superboss is now saying—puts it better than I could.” The tiny shrill tone of the midget was instantly swamped by the oily wave of Earth Federal President Olcot’s oratory. He was coming in to land with a splendid “comber” of perorational climax. “We are called upon by Providence today to do something far beyond the old devices of statecraft when the dream was to adjust the balance of the Old World with the New. Today as your leader I turn to the classic world for a simile sufficiently vast to match the creative daring of our plan. And that simile I transcend. For Zeus when attacked by the jealousy of his fellow gods called on the dark underground titans to save him. Today as the underworld forces threaten us I call down the skies, I summon the stars to our rightful aid.” “Gosh,” said the returning pilot (in answer to the midget’s exultant question, “What do you think of that? Aren’t we apt?”) “Gosh, you timed it neatly. The old man must be in a fix.”

But when, in what seemed no more than some brooding minutes, while his dials clocked round, he saw all the hands back at base, and the order came to “open hatch,” and he found he was gazing down from a station of some couple of thousand feet onto old earth again, the scene was anything but uninviting. It was a victory parade, no doubt about it. Right down from the Capitol—with its Titanium crystal dome, given it when it was christened World Capitol, flashing in the sun. Right down from the hill to the river, the great new auditorium, forum of mankind, was packed with all the world delegates. Through the perfect public address system he could hear his eerie—“I welcome you in the name of humanity.” The man back from Mars focused his lens on the welcoming figure below. Then sweeping his eye round the sky he saw the other side of the question. As far as eye could range, rank on rank in hovering tiers, the huge mantle of heaven was sown with close-set orderly bands of silver-white scallop shells. Suddenly a slight movement modified this simple formation. A cry broke from the carpet of white dots, the faces of millions turned upward. But the cry was a laugh. Most of the bands of ranked planet-shells had kept their stations. But

in one quarter of the sky the white craft had balled in clusters, in stars. The whole vast pattern gently undulated. You'd have thought a breeze was waving a flag that covered the whole sky. "Old Glory," gulped the president. "New Glory," shouted the world delegates. "Glory," simply roared the simple devout.

Here was the promised sign from heaven: earth was saved. Then like the spring-bursting of ripe seeds, each shell, each bivalve opened. On the lip could be seen the bee crews poised. But they didn't swarm down. Their wings, though, vibrated as earth bees fan when they are keeping the hive cool. An intense note cut the air. The returned pilot again focused on the president. The note rose to piercing pitch. He saw the president keeping his fingers crossed to keep from thrusting them into his ears. Then the note modulated. With a piercing volume never given it before on earth, the earth dwellers heard with almost deafened ears, hissing down, piercing down, the strains—the now-almost ear-unbearable strains—of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. "Oh say can you see," hummed the president into the microphone, wondering how long his ears would stand such listening, hoping his own singing might relieve the outer assault on his eardrums.

After that masterly Martian maneuver, mankind was stunned. The president made a Whitmanesque gesture of welcome. "I'm slated to go down. Come along." His mannikin mentor's squeak sounded in his cabin. He slammed his hatch, switched earth-surface-float, swung back again the hatch lever, looked out, and he was literally at the president's feet. The great man in fact bent and hauled him onto the podium. Standing there was his mannikin. He felt a rush of comradeship as they met again. He was more at home with his planetary pet than with the home world president he'd never actually seen before. But his laugh of welcome as he picked up the squirrel man had also fun in it. For the little fellow had shown another cute insight into his clumsy race's prejudices. It didn't put the strain on its hosts they'd have suffered if it had come to the reception in nothing but its home-grown furs. It was draped in an academic gown. It saw the

joke of it. The president, too, being of course earth's greatest actor, immediately seized on the situation. Bowing he took the midget from the pilot's arms and bore it to a stand before the televisors. Its proportions were of course perfect. With no one standing by to give human stature scale, the little fellow in his gown looked that uncommon but pleasing combination, a professor in the full tan of health. The president boomed in the mikes, "I give you our super-ambassador, our new and decisive ally." With a bow the midget took over:

"Honored Hosts": That was safe, the hyphen pilot reflected with a sigh of relief. He'd feared it might start off with something like "Fellow Creatures." That he felt sure would have chilled curiosity into criticism. We hypertrophies wouldn't stand for any patronage from an imp. He recalled his own reactions so little time back—and he, then, was in every sense of the word off his own ground. "It is with the utmost gratitude that we return thanks for the privilege you have permitted us of viewing your planet." The little voice the mike-manipulators had modulated till it sounded a pleasant tenor. That was neat—to suggest that an interview had been granted, leave been given in the name of science to view our treasures, so as to spread education among the backward races. It echoed his thought. "Ours is an out-of-the-way station, we have a back seat in the solar system compared with yours. Our whole standard of life is less rich and varied. Our problems have been hard but simple. The poor have always a simpler problem to solve than the rich; the not-too-intelligent can often find solutions more quickly than can the clever who are confronted with far more complex issues and outlooks. It is all the more kind of you to welcome us backwoodsmen to your paradise." It was the right flattery. Everyone likes their house being taken for a palace, their garden for Eden. "Yours—our whole system allows it—is the Pearl of the Planets. Your landscapes how variegated, your skies how rich, your waters how wonderful. A worthy setting in its variety for your amazing versatility. Naturally with your abundance you have infinite possibilities still to be worked out. The inexhaustible richness of what you have, the astounding experiments that

you have made—why the stimulant of being but a moment with you makes our minds teem with questions and flutter with tentative proposals. You will have grasped that we have—by the simple pressure of our events, been pushed to cooperations and partnerships which you can still consider. I am only a minimal man . . .” “Well, certainly the good little brownie hasn’t gotten a swelled head,” the senator of Alaska remarked to the huge blond senator of Greenland. “A minimal man living in a simple world, so the illustrations I would give in this address you permit me to deliver, are of course from the small way of life known to me. We small fellows some millions years ago got badly off the track. Pretty silly for such mannikins. You can see we’re not made as fire-eaters or man-eaters for that matter. But we thought we were the big and final thing. Looking at you I see how provincial we were.” This too was well received with a slow roll of what was half “Hear! Hear!” half “Ha! Ha!” “In quite a little while though we began to swell up like blisters, and were as hot and angry. Of course in our simple place the rest of the living things tried to get out of our way. I am very sorry to say we did in most of the mammals. And of course we were gunning for our fellows, and, once the board was cleared, we began to go for each other hard. But thank stars and space we hadn’t gotten round to the bees. They were too clever. And when we did, they’d gone ahead enough not to get alarmed and try and run us out of the place. Finally they taught us—they wanted us to cooperate. They didn’t want us as slaves—but as co-operators, as men-plus-bees, as symbiots. They retaught us. First they taught us how to get on—what is the right way to contact each other.”

The vast audience had begun to shift a bit, fidget, sigh, even a yawn or two went like a tired breeze up and down the ranks. “I’ll illustrate,” said the little figure at the televisor. It raised its hand and made a queer whistling note. A swarm of bees shot down, making a five-pointed star over its head. The note suddenly rose to a sharp scream. Fortunately it rapidly passed audibility range, shooting into the supersonic. Evidently they sustained it for the best part of a minute. Then

a fine buzzing was coming down from all the air. Not any note from the superflotilla. No, it was somehow very soothing, making you think of afternoons under the limes with nothing to do and not a crisis within foreboding range. "Of course," said everyone. The air was full of bees, our honey bees. From every direction they were pouring in, swarming so that they made small, dark, moving clouds over the tops of the houses and trees. Then they began to settle. The glitter of the Capitol dome turned a dark amber as the hundreds of million small bodies alighted on it. The cornices and pediments were loaded. Then every tree began to sag with the weight. "This isn't merely an illustration," cut in the midget commentator. "A conference is now going on between our bees and yours. Ours couldn't come here and not call on their cousins. My talking to you doesn't interrupt their negotiations." "That's clever," muttered the president, hunched like a puppet master above the midget orator. "That makes us humans think you and us are one, more than we could if you hadn't got your bees to call in and talk on the side with ours!" "Henceforth," the little tenor voice went on, "I can promise all world beekeepers the first of the gifts we wish to bring to you on earth. If you will follow the rules we have found, your bee knowledge can be boosted today a million years. And," it made a bow, "I hope that I may awake in you as much confidence as the earth bees have felt for my partners!"

"A neat and tactful start, very," the president patted with his huge finger the small golden brown instep that just emerged from the hem of the model academic gown. "You might now get on with all the all-over help you can give us." The doll nodded. "We've heard—the whole solar system knows—of Four Freedoms. May I then tell you how we have interpreted that great command, and I believe solved the needs to which it drew attention. Those needs are surely Food, Physique (right size), co-Functioning, and the Future (life control)." A tiny flutter, the president's scanning eye could see, a kind of shimmer, played over the long and somewhat stolid ranks of the world delegate listeners. "That's good,"

he muttered to himself. "A sufficient number is taking note." "You must, we all must, have enough food; starvation's revolution. We've solved that and can show you, with your wonderful natural endowment, how to do so at once here. Sugar-and-starch, the basic food couple—that's yours from now on. I have brought you a few first fruits, specimens, proofs of my big promise." He held up his two hands. In the palm of one lay some little dry lumps. "These are rhysomes of our milk-sugar succulents. Yes, they'll grow magnificently in all your temperate and tropic zones. The whole plant is edible and a complete basic food, and here," he opened his left palm to show it dotted with small specks, "are the seeds of our sugar grass. It's even harder and easier to harvest. It's a tremendous energy giver. You'll find your general resistance going up with a bounce. You won't have to bother yourselves with people not wishing to work, and with food-drudging out of the way you can choose what fun you like. With the right to food, to the sugar-starch basic gift, is added inevitably the right to and gift of health. That's really right stature." "Gosh," muttered the president. "Is he going to give us a lecture on hygiene? I know sick men are sore men, but—" The midget mindread or simply knew its business. "That will become clear when we get down to mapping details and explaining points in discussion. And Freedom Three, well you've seen us illustrating it and with your rich earth how many more symbiotic harmonies you can make! Freedom Two gives you the real freehold of the earth. Freedom Three gives you for the first time real cooperation with all fellow life. Sugar, Stature, Symbiosis, and crowning these three, the fourth, Service." The president didn't need to be a mind-reader to know his audience of world delegates was challenging that. But neither did the doll ambassador. "Symbiosis *and* Service. That coupling was our great surprise." "Must say," subcommented the president, "it seems to see where we could take offense. That's shrewd to speak as one who had tumbled on things, not as a know-all."

"I'm permitted to say that our balanced way of life, our 'two-chamber' government of life, if I may put it in that



manner, permits, insists on, two patterns of living. We men must always be individualists." The acceptability of the doctrine to the ears of the vast audience permitted them not to cavil at being coupled with a dwarf. "We humans are by nature, by structure, pioneers. We are life's antennae rather than its hands. But left to ourselves we are too powerful an engine without its freight cars in tow. We rush ahead and get derailed, sidetracked, wrecked. We need a practical critic, a tail, a rudder! We have found it in our bees. That's the formula—what you might call hymenopt-humanoid. They are the socialists, we the individualists. We are the pure-research pioneers—all ideas and all for change. They are the applied research developers. They tumbled to this first. They saw they were getting all balled up, all humped and hived in their local success. But for us, they'd have stuck, living fossils, hypnotized in the vicious circle of their own success." A presidential chuckle counterpointed this alliterative flick. "And," the little voice went on grave, "but for them we'd be extinct. We balance in symbiotic salience, like a flying arrow."

Questions broke out then—the two-way system allowed discussion between the vast audience and the minute ambassador. "It's going swimmingly," the president purred. Then a minute "ting" sounded from his breast pocket. His face slumped. He knew that pinpoint note—all too well. That was Super Special Service Agent No. 1 on the secret short wave. He slipped the little plastic cone in his left ear. Yes, it was the Z.O.Z. note—the zero signal. He knew how close a thing it was bound to be. He surely hadn't surrendered to the secret treaty negotiations (which Planet 4 had so long been pressing on Planet 3) till it was certain that without external aid he wouldn't stay on top down here. But that, after all their superneat timing, his alter ego on the Underground front should slip up now, was exasperating. He'd always been a gambler but he thought that his counter supersonic propaganda had been holding the Underground's subsonic. Of course he knew that they were always a hop ahead of him in their telling slogans. The whispering sublogan "The Fed: don't feed" percolated and eroded at those levels where the

Fed officials had to meet the unofficial underfed. The Underground worked by percolation. You could never say who was in it. Anyone might be. People came into it and out of it. But it, like an invisible stream, went on forever. It was fed, he used to think, by some need to gamble, to compete, to hate whoever was running the show. As far as the Fed could find out, and they tried hard, there wasn't any Underground headquarters. You'd think their slogans somehow spread themselves. All he'd been certain of was there was probably a small mobile group, strategy schemers. And their objective pretty certainly was some concerted bomb outrages on the central power nodes. They'd time it no doubt when discontent was hot enough to make the wrecking turn to their advantage. It wouldn't be at all too hard, for if treason went as high as some informers swore it did, then the guards would get forged orders. Then there needn't be a single subofficial killed. Only the old Fed masters would disappear and the new take their place. Still he was sure that his commander in the deep field would have held things off just for the few hours that were needed. And his agent, on whom he had banked everything, who'd sworn to him by all the stars and stripes that he could hold the U.G. till the Martian pact was made, now the fool had flummicked it. That was the signal that the infiltrators—who, they knew, would try it, if they could infiltrate high enough—had seized basic geodetic control. That meant the whole power system would now be warped—no plane fly, no dynamo move, everything frozen, the double nelson, super-jujitsu hold. His mind flashed all this as his voice said just that one odd word, "Well?" A moment after his face took on an even queerer cast. This was worse than his worst suspicion had calculated. S.S.S. Agent No. 1 had gone mad, been seized and sent mad. That was it! All was up! And just when victory was in one's palm! "You never guessed, of course," went on S.S.S. Agent No. 1, "but I'm No. 1—U.G., the man you picked me to catch. Of course any calculating machine would have shown you that. Push up competition (call it the competition to survive) as we have, and in the end, with all this Super-Secrecy-Suspicion what have you? Naturally we

all change sides. Can't help it. It's obvious psychological law—turn patriotism paranoic and who's Public Enemy No. 1? Why of course my closest colleague, the top man in this case; of course he's been put there to sell the pass. Because he's outwardly tops of our side that *proves* (to paranoids) he's really the superenemy who's bored his way up from underneath. It's as simple and inevitable as the circling snake swallowing its own tail. Of course when I'd been Underground long enough, I *knew* you were Underground's superspy, superplant. So I, by becoming U.G. No. 1, could superplant you."

"So now," the president broke in dryly, "you've highjacked me! Well, it may not interest you if you're mad, but I happen to be sane, straight. I'm just a blundering honest fool fighter. But of course as you've gone over, you have us beat. So you'd better do your bestest." "But I'm not mad," remarked the small voice short-waving from one of the dynamo-deeps. "It was only the system that was crazy, not us." "What do you mean?" "Well now you've called in real cooperators that ends competition. The struggle to survive's over. I rang you up to give you a birthday present for the New Age—the Underground's dissolved. You've granted our demands—we're coming up. With enough food there can be a real Fed. With real symbiosis, with all life on a common front, there can be union now."

The dwarf had just answered a question, and humorously evidently, as laughter was running along the long benches. The president lifted him aside. "I venture to interrupt," he called. "with news of victory. The first made by the new planetary alliance. The Underground's surrendered. They've heard the good news. They are coming up. One world is a fact, but also it means one solar system too."

He flicked an order to the superpipe organs that with their ranks of giant tubes made colonnades down each side of the forum assembly benches. He led the chorus, "All creatures that on planets dwell . . ." The old doxology shook the sky as flight by flight the pearl-tinted shells of the visiting fleet rose into the evening air like a snowstorm in reverse. "Au

*revoir*," he shouted. "The bridge that has been thrown," squeaked the mannikin's voice from its now invisible egg. "That bridge will never be withdrawn. I give you the health of the solar system."

## Cleve Cartmill **YOU CAN'T SAY THAT**

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*Censorship can be a deadly instrument, for it frequently defeats the very good purposes for which it is sometimes intended. But in a world divided, with enemies at every gate, governments are forced to guard their communications with the utmost care. And the average citizen accepts reasonable limitations on his actions, realizing that usually, in democracies, these are in the interests of his own welfare.*

*So Wayne Chambers, a young Communications Division executive, was suspicious when someone protested too much over what seemed like a minor matter to him. But he never anticipated what he was getting into when he tried to make sense of what appeared to be a simple chess problem that was stopped by his department for a routine check before being sent abroad at the usual cable rates.*

*Here's a first-rate Cartmill yarn, packed with action. But there's a lot of sense underlying the action and excitement, too.*

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**ON** A HIGH POLICY LEVEL, there was communication between governments. Derisive sounds tinged with desperation.

On lower levels, too, there was communication. A man in Peoria cabled a cousin somewhere in Eurasia that some bureau or other had refused the visa request. A loyal citizen of New Chicago sent, on the fifth of every month, a limp little heap

of scurrilous prose to the Dictator of the Southern Democracies. A businessman from Africa insisted he'd been foxed on the trade of a boatload of plantain for six Alaskan ermines to be used for breeding purposes, for he discovered, upon arrival (or so he said) that all six were male. And Alaska answered, of course, that they had been swindled because he'd picked the plantain ripe.

All was not, nor could it be, calculating silence. But the internal snarls and battlings were muffled. There were bureaus to see to that. Nothing went from one bloc to another that might give aid and comfort to a potential enemy.

Every so often some good soul stood up and pointed to the harvest of stagnation to come. His logic was always lucid. Everyone agreed in principle; or, that is to say, they conspired to pay no attention to him.

True, what he said would happen, would, in the long run, happen. But, as Lord Keynes remarked some five hundred years before, "In the long run, we shall all be dead." With the happy heritage of a thousand years spent in plundering the planet's various resources, physical, spiritual, and human, the statesmen could plead, as always, precedent and expediency.

Let the next generation, if any, find the solution.

The Bureau of International Censorship for the North American Land Mass had numerous departments in both its Eastern and Western Divisions. The most spastic department in the Western Division was the one controlling cables to and from, among other places, the Chinese Capital of Eurasia, the best current candidate for potential enemy.

Wayne Chambers was in charge of it. Had been, in fact, for the last two years, which spoke well for his nervous system.

The Monday morning when relations with Eurasia were at one of their periodic crests, he came to work feeling better than most of his office staff looked. He had spent the week end in the sun, and he flashed smug smiles at the glum operators of coders, decoders, scramblers, and typewriters. The

majority returned pained smiles or pretended not to notice him.

There were more messages on his desk than usual. And on the top of the stack was the cryptic note: "Call FA about Lamb."

"Lamb?" he mused. It meant nothing to him. So he flipped on the intercom. "Fred? This is Wayne. What's this about Lamb?"

"Oh, morning, Wayne. Last Tuesday your office received a cable for transmission signed Lamb. I phoned about fifteen minutes ago, and your secretary checked it for me. Looks like you'd rejected it. I'd like to know your reason."

"I don't remember it offhand. I'll call you back after I look at it, Fred."

"That'll be fine."

Wayne tipped a switch for his secretary. "Shirley, you want to bring that Lamb thing in here?"

"Right away."

When she came in, he noticed that she did not have the Monday morning look. It was more the Saturday night look of a girl waiting for her date to arrive. Last year he had had a fast affair with her, which had been pleasant. And now he was able to look at her with almost paternal fondness.

"Thanks," he said, taking the form message. "That does it, kid."

He called Fred again. "I place this Lamb, now. It's not in clear text. I must have sent a routine reject notice out on it."

"Would you mind bringing it over to my office, Wayne?"

"Hell, Fred. I'm snowed under here."

"It won't take long."

Wayne looked at the work on his desk. "If you say so. I'll be right over, then."

He left the office and stepped onto the glidewalk that carried him along gently curved corridors and up one level to his chief's office. It said Mr. Samson on the door, but everyone called Mr. Samson either Fred or FA. This was because Mr. Samson was bald.

In the office, Wayne was introduced to an obviously infuriated gentleman with gray hair and pallid cheeks.

"How do you do, Doctor Weston?" Wayne acknowledged.

"Did you ever play chess, young man?" Dr. Weston said bitterly.

"I always thought it was a rather dull game," Wayne said. He knew, now, that this was another V.I.P. They didn't like to be edited or rejected according to the rules governing lesser breeds.

"Yes," Dr. Weston said, after a circumspect glance. "I can well believe that. And did you notice to whom the cable was addressed?"

"To a gentleman named Dr. Juan Quirito, in Santiago," Wayne said.

"Dr. Quirito," Dr. Weston said, almost dancing in fury now, "is one of the world's foremost chess masters. He has won the Southern Democracies Tournament for three straight seasons."

Wayne realized that this was probably quite true.

"Mr. Lamb, myself, and several of the other outstanding chess experts on the planet are initiating a program of exchanging chess problems for amusement and relaxation. And you have taken it upon yourself, young man, to sabotage what may be the first step in improving international relations since Censorship."

"This is a chess problem I take it?" Wayne said. He looked at the message. W: K-KB5; Q-QB3; R-QB8; Kt-K5; P-K3. B: K-Q4; Q-K7; P-Q3. W-M: 2. "Well, I didn't turn it over to the Chamber. I just sent out a request to the sender for clear text, but I didn't get an answer. That's the usual procedure."

"Let me see it," Dr. Weston said. "Here. Now. Look here. This message indicates the position of the pieces on the board. What can be plainer than that? It's perfectly clear. The King on the King's Bishop's fifth square; Queen on Queen's Bishop three; Rook, Queen's Bishop . . ."

"Ah, yes, I see," Wayne said somewhat dryly. "But I'm afraid I can't visualize a board like you do . . . If I may have



the message, please? Thanks. Because I wouldn't know a Queen's Bishop from a landing field."

Dr. Weston puffed his pallid cheeks.

"Well," Fred said, from behind his streamlined desk, "Wayne, I guess you owe Dr. Weston, here, an apology. We'll be glad to send the problem right out, Dr. Weston."

"I'll have to check it with someone who knows chess," Wayne said. "I'm responsible for all messages that go through my department. But it won't take me very long to check it."

Dr. Weston said, gritting his teeth, "I'm one of the world's foremost authorities . . ."

"What Wayne meant, Dr. Weston: check with someone in his department. You see . . ."

Wayne looked at the doctor. He was boiling merrily.

"Well," Wayne said, "I'll leave you now, Fred. Sorry about the mix-up, Doctor."

No one in Wayne's department admitted to playing chess, but Shirley suggested Larry, the Thinker, who worked in Foreign Publications.

Wayne, who made it a point to know a great number of people, knew the Thinker more or less well. So, after lunch, he rode the glidewalk over to the Kempton Memorial Building where the Thinker worked. At the door to the building, his body and badge were ocllographed and the results compared to a file of cross-presses from original records. Inside, he spoke a series of passwords into a series of armed microphones.

Although, as head of a department, he was entitled to restricted entry into the Kempton Memorial Building, he went there no more frequently than necessary. There was a special section of the building devoted to God-knew-what, and eyes of atomic guns waited ready to vaporize any unauthorized personnel who tried to enter it.

He found the Thinker on the fourth floor, alone in a cubby-hole, surrounded by heaps of magazines and other trivia.

The Thinker sat with his broad and graceful hands intermeshed, his head canted to the left. Wayne hated to wake him up.

"Larry?"

"Eh? Eh? Oh. 'Lo, Wayne, buddy-buddy." The Thinker bent forward and said in a startlingly deep voice, "What can I do for you, buddy-buddy?"

"Do you play chess, Larry?"

"A little."

Wayne handed the message form across a pile of Journals of Chinese Agriculture. "Is this thing okay?"

The Thinker scratched his left eyebrow, reading. "Well . . . It calls for White mating in two. This W-M: 2, here at the end. But it looks to me like White can mate in one: either Queen to Bishop six or Queen to Queen four. Which makes it a lousy problem: you're supposed to have only one possible answer."

"Would most chess players be able to figure that out, Larry?"

"If they'd played more than three games."

"It's not something to puzzle an expert, then?"

"Checker expert, maybe. Possibly throw a Canasta man. But chess player, no."

"Thanks, Larry . . . I may be calling on you again."

"Any time, buddy-buddy."

Wayne went back to his office. He closed his eyes and blanked out the noise of busy machines.

So far, he had followed through a routine check. It was what his job called for. It wasn't routine any more. Not if the Thinker was right. For an expert wouldn't take one *more* move to mate than a neophyte. Unless, of course, the problem was not to find the simple solution. Damn it, he thought, I wish I knew more about chess. If Dr. Weston is a V.I.P., and he obviously is, it would be a fine kettle of fish to delay transmission of a message he's interested in on such skimpy evidence.

He punched for Shirley. "Send this out," he said, giving her the message form. "No, wait. Make this—here. Let me have it again." He took it back and drew a line through the W-M: 2 and wrote above it, W-M: 1.

If it was a code key, they'd have fun with it now.

And then he tried to put it out of his mind, but it continued to annoy him.

Half an hour later he spoke to Shirley again. "Was that Lamb thing sent?"

"I don't know. I'll see."

"Don't file the form when it is. I want it back."

A few minutes later, Shirley came in. "Here 'tis. It's been processed."

"Thanks, Shirley."

He took it. It was getting a bit dog-eared. In sudden decision, he sight-beamed Santa Fe.

While he was waiting for his party, he tried to imagine why one Mr. Lamb didn't protest the reject on the cable—why, instead, one Dr. Weston, V.I.P., did.

"Hi, Pete, glad to see you again," he said into the image screen when he got his man.

Pete's twinkle-eyed face bobbed greeting. "It's been—oh, hell, I guess three months, eh? You look sunburned."

"Just a tan."

"You want something?"

Wayne looked at the message form again. "Here's the job. There's a man called Lamb in a town called Lincoln; ever hear of the town?"

"They once had an outlaw named Billy the Kid in jail there. It keeps the town on the map."

"Could one of your boys check on this Lamb? I hate like hell to ask you, Pete, but it's not the sort of thing I'd want to stick my neck out on by taking it through all sorts of channels."

"I'm kinda shorthanded."

"See what you can do, though, will you? I'd appreciate it. It's to clear my conscience, in a way."

"Husband?"

"No. Fortunately, no. Chess expert, I think."

"Chess expert, did you say?" Pete said. "Well, I'll see what I can do. In case I get it, how you want it?"

"Nonstop, diplomatic, sealed tube. To my apartment. Can do?"

"Right, Wayne. Hope to be up your way in a bit. See you then. I've got to click off. There's a tongue-flowered orchid growers association or something clamoring at my door."

"Thanks, Pete. See you."

He turned once more to the accreting business on the desk.

Before he was finished with it, the quitting time chime sounded softly. He decided not to work late. He put a pile of messages into Operations pneumatic tube, another pile into Filing, and the remainder sat accusingly in the center of his desk.

He went to the roof, entered a low-level airbus and paid his fare to the library.

Once there, his youth and good looks brought a great deal of fussing and running around from a woman whose youth and good looks had existed, if ever, far in the past. He presently found himself in a viewing-reading cubicle with a pile of books and a box of microfilm.

He put a chess game in the viewer, but he could make no sense out of the players' slow, deliberate moves. He looked over the books and selected an old one by a man named Capablanca.

He tried to tell himself that he'd been intending to learn to play chess for years.

He checked out the book and decided to walk home. Night had fallen, and a stroll in the park, which would take him to within a few hundred yards of his apartment house, would take the desk fatigue out of his body.

He liked the park; the rustling of leaves, the lush night odors, the muted sounds of civilization—these were both restful and stimulating.

The path was pale from the far-off reflections of commercial light. Shrubs and plants to either side of the path were clumps of formless black.

The man who stopped him said, "Got a light?"

"Yeah, just a second."

When Wayne brought out his cigarette lighter, the man studied his face closely in the soft glare. The man's pupils

were abnormally expanded, and Wayne frowned, trying to connect that with some significant fact.

"Whatcha got there?"

"A book on chess," Wayne said before he realized it was none of the man's business.

"Your name's Chambers, maybe?"

"Hey! What is this!"

"It's a little late to holler copper," said the man, hitting him in the mouth.

He went down. And two shadow figures joined his assailant. The three of them proceeded to kick and stomp his body. Lances of pain shot through injured muscles.

He tried to roll away, and they kicked him scientifically. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, for one of them giggled. Wayne lashed out with his feet, hit empty air. A foot caught him in the chest, and he concentrated on breathing, which was suddenly difficult.

One of the men obligingly kicked him between the eyes, and he forgot about trying to breathe.

Sensibly, he screamed, and the sound was rewarded by hurrying footsteps.

Each of the three assailants took a parting shot and left.

Someone was standing over him asking foolish questions.

He said, "Go away. I'm sick."

The voice said, "I'll go for a doctor."

Footsteps went away.

Wayne shook his head and got to his knees. He ran exploring hands over himself, but aside from being a solid mass of pain, aside from a broken rib or two, there seemed to be no vital damage.

He licked puffy lips and tasted salty blood.

Automatically he checked his personal possessions. He hadn't been robbed. He got to his feet groaning.

And he realized the Capablanca was gone.

He swore softly and viciously. Not because of the loss, though the book, being old, would probably cost many times the amount of cash he had in his wallet; but at the idiocy of

giving a man a brutal beating just in order to steal his book.

He shook his head to rid it of any annoying muzziness.

Then he remembered the first man's eyes. Large pupils. The fact finally clicked: Dope. That was it.

Some of the boys out for a night of innocent merriment. They had probably taken the book on a mad impulse. The motive for the beating, then, was merely exuberance: they had been feeling their oats. If someone hadn't come along, doubtless, they would have stomped him to death. But being none too brave under drugs, they had fled.

He was hurt and sore; he didn't want to think; all he wanted was a relaxing bath and medication for his wounds. He limped along the path to the street, along the street to his apartment. It hurt to breathe.

Inside the apartment, he studied his face in the mirror. It was lumpy and swollen and streaked with blood. Both eyes were black. He stripped and examined his body and found blackened bruised areas from his toes to his shoulders.

He soaked in hot water for an hour, and much of the ache drained out of his muscles. Infra-red baking relieved him still more, and after applying ointments, he felt pretty good. Except that it still hurt to breathe, and his mirror still said he looked like he'd gone three rounds with a pile driver.

He got into a robe and house boots. What he needed was a drink. He went to his liquor cabinet and was appalled at the inroads the last party had made on it. All he had left was about eight ounces of gin and two of vermouth. But that was just right for a big dry martini. So he stirred them together.

The first glass relaxed him.

And he started to get angry. What the hell kind of a police department let innocent citizens get beat up in a public park? He reached across to flip on the commercial screen and lodge a complaint.

Then it occurred to him that the boys in the park had known his name.

He stopped his hand in midair.

Someone had hired three dope-happy thugs to kill him.

It was an unpleasant thought, and he poured himself an-

other drink. They had been waiting not for just anyone, but for Wayne Chambers.

Then he did call the police.

"An attempt was made on my life this evening," he told them. He recounted the details, and they informed him to sit tight. A man would be right over.

Wayne did not go to work the next day.

The police had provided him with a bodyguard (no department head in the Censorship Bureau was going to be killed if they could help it) and their surgeon, who had looked him over and bandaged his chest tightly with yards of gauze, recommended a day in bed.

The next day, Wednesday, when he went to work, his chest still ached, and he felt acutely embarrassed because a plain-clothesman tagged behind him through the noisy office.

As yet he had not thought of any reason for the attempt on his life; and like the police, he was curious, but unlike the police, a little frightened.

He was scarcely settled at his desk when Shirley came in with an armload of work, and for the next two hours he lost himself in it.

Then Fred called, and Wayne knew that he was concerned. A few minutes later, in Fred's office, Wayne found out why.

Wayne was no longer head of the Department of Cables, Western Division, Bureau of Censorship.

The order had come through only a few minutes before. From the main Eastern office. And there was nothing Fred could do about it but send back a strongly worded protest.

The reason, ostensibly, was a matter of very little importance that had occurred several months previously. But Wayne knew, and Fred knew, that it was only an excuse. If they had wanted his job over that, they would have had it long ago. It was because of something more recent; pressure from somewhere, conceivably from some irate V.I.P. V.I.P.'s were one of the occupational hazards.

Fred brought out a bottle from the desk, and sitting in his office, the two of them got slightly crocked and maudlin.

"Damned filthy shame," Fred said every so often, and Wayne echoed the words. Until they knew, suddenly, that nothing more could be said, so they shook hands and Wayne went back and cleaned out his desk and bid Shirley a drunken and overly lighthearted good-by. He noticed his bodyguard was already gone; doubtless the man had phoned his office when he heard the news, and they had decided, presumably, that the life of an ex-department head was of little consequence.

Outside, he stood on a pedestrian island and unconsciously read signs on the glidewalk. He picked one advertising sea foods and stepped onto it.

Afterward, he went home.

He slept for three hours, and when he awoke he sat on the bed with his head in his hands and asked himself: What does a man do without a job, without any prospect of a job, but with a hang-over and a growing sense of outrage?

"I have been most foully handled," he said aloud. And shook his head savagely. His mouth was dehydrated.

He got up and stretched and was still stiff and sore. He drank two glasses of water from the tap. He decided on a drink of something stronger, but the cabinet was empty. It was too much trouble to go out for a bottle. He didn't feel up to it.

He noticed that while he slept, or perhaps sometime in the morning, a sealed tube had fallen into the box from his pneumatic. He walked across, picked it up, tore it open.

It was from Santa Fe. From Pete. Information on Lamb, and he started to throw it in the incinerator because it was no longer any of his business. But out of curiosity he glanced at it first.

"Wayne, you sunburned so and so: Got a man down to Lincoln after all. This Lamb's been there a couple of years. Couldn't find out where he came from, before. No wife, no girl friends, no vices—excuse the redundancy—teetotaler. Plays chess like you said. Must have his money buried somewhere, because he's got it and it's not in the bank and he doesn't work. That's the size of it. Hope it helps. Give Shirley the best. Pete."



Wayne frowned. There was something to think about here, if he only felt like thinking. He went to his clothes hamper and brought out the bloody suit. The message form from Lamb was still there. He put it on the dresser and went about the business of fixing supper.

As pleasant odors came from the stove, he tried to get his thoughts in order. A fast cup of coffee helped.

It seemed obvious that someone didn't like the way he had run his department. Because of something he'd done recently.

So they hired three snowbirds to knock him off. That would be the easy and obvious way to get him out of the department. Failing in the attempt, they had exerted themselves a bit more and got his job. There were a thousand ways they could have done that. Influence to bear on any of a hundred officials . . . Fred's protest would be taken up, and eventually a hearing would be held, and he would find out the charges against him. But hell. Wayne thought, they can make a case against anyone who has to make as many decisions as I made. The real reason need never come out.

When supper was on the table he was good and mad.

He was beginning to suspect a chess problem could proliferate problems; one of them, at least, a highly personal one, involving, among other things, room, board, upkeep, and self-respect.

He didn't like to be had. He didn't like people trying to kill him. He didn't like being fired.

After he ate, he consulted the various directories in his apartment. He ran down the lists of Westons. He found one, Aloysius D., with a doctor's degree of sorts: veterinarian. But it didn't sound like his man.

He screened Fred at his home. Fred, when he answered, was somewhat red-eyed.

Fred had information on Weston. Laurence L. A big cheese. Executive v.p. of this; recording secretary of that; politically active. Fred put it this way: "Big enough to get your job, yes. And mine to boot." Wayne copied down Dr. Weston's home address, thanked Fred, and signed off.

Then he sat thinking. If Weston was a big shot: why was he

playing for peanuts—and it would be peanuts if this was a conventional ring engaged in bootlegging information to the Southern Democracies. What was Weston's pitch? What did he expect to get out of it? Why should he be interested enough to get Wayne fired?

And what, in the first place, was wrong with the chess problem that would make someone try to kill him because he held up transmission of it and then tried to investigate?

He reached over and flicked the screen on once more. This time he called a friend of his in the Cryptoanalysis Department, the Black Chamber.

"George: I've got one for you."

"Shoot."

He explained the chess problem and, getting Lamb's message form, read off the text. "Can you look into it?"

"Read it again. I'll copy it down."

Having done that, George signed off, and fifteen minutes later he called back.

"It's a legitimate problem, Wayne. Perhaps the order of pieces on the board represents a code: it's possible, but I don't have nearly enough characters to tell. If it is a code, it's probably a reference code of some sort, judging from its length. It would probably be a hell of a job to crack it. I can take it down and have some of the boys try, if you'll get me an authorization."

Wayne smiled wanly. "Noooo. I just wanted an opinion . . . I couldn't very well get an authorization. I don't work there any more. I stepped on one too many sets of toes."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Wayne."

"I was, too. It makes a man mad to be discriminated against for conscientiousness. I'll see you, George. Thanks."

More fact: it might be a code. If so, a good one. Since he had been reasonably certain it was, he was glad but not surprised to have his view substantiated. That was that. He wasn't interested in cracking it. The fact that it might be a code was the important thing. Now the problem was to find out who the people were behind it. And for whom they were working.

He screened Shirley. When she saw his face, she said, "I feel like hell about you being fired. What rotten luck. It's rough breaking in a new boss, and Johnson's got the department now, and you know how he is." Her eyes were serious, and her fingernails, coral-tipped, brushed at a sun-jeweled earring.

"Shirley, would you do something for me?"

"You know I would, Wayne."

"Listen, kid. Can you find out if there's been any more of those chess problems?"

"There was one yesterday. I remember, because you were home, and Johnson took it in to FA. FA said send it out, I think."

"Would you find out whom it was from and whom it was for? The same thing if any more come through?"

"Sure, Wayne."

"And would you send a request to the Eastern branch for information on chess problems they've transmitted? And then, just so I can be sure that the one I saw wasn't a freak, will you take whatever texts you can find over to the Thinker—no, you'll have to phone them to him; you can't get in Kempton—and have him check the move requirements?"

"All right. And Wayne. For old time's sake, we might go dancing Saturday. It might be fun."

"That's a good idea, Shirley. But you'll phone me before?"

"As soon as I get anything. I'm going to miss you at work."

"Thanks, kid. Thanks a lot."

Before the next morning was halfway into the Heretofore, Wayne was a bundle of nervous energy. He paced the apartment restlessly, tried to read, tried watching commercial television. But he couldn't concentrate. Enforced idleness was terrifyingly different than vacation, and he missed the job acutely.

Two years ago he would have said he didn't give a damn about the job; if he held it, all right; if he lost it, all right. Three years ago he would have laughed ironically and said, "I work thirty hours a week paring the heart out of civilization." And four years ago he would have called a worker in Censor-

ship an intellectual prostitute: a man of easily purchased principles.

But somehow in the last four years he had changed. It was a shift in viewpoint, and he realized, wryly, that some of his college friends would say he had sold out in return for a good job. But that would be superficial. The job had changed him, of course, but it had been change, not compromise.

Probably it was due in large measure to the fact that he now understood the men behind both internal and external Censorship. Honest men, doing only what seemed to them necessary. Our wheat production statistics would inflame the Asian masses to insane jealousy; accordingly, they must not know. The location of our underground steel factories, if known, would be pinpointed on foreign maps as high priority targets—for the if and when. And internally, people cannot incite citizens to sabotage and treason.

True, Censorship drove people farther apart, formed false boundaries, made false hates. It grew from fear, it spawned fear. And from fear, antithought. If you start burning false ideas to save yourself from fear of them, you won't know when to stop until the human mind is ashes. There are better ways. Censorship chokes and throttles and defeats its purpose. But the solution is not to remove the symptom but to cure the disease.

There was an answer, somewhere, of how to get at the causes: selfishness, greed, suspicion, fear, intolerance. People did not have to be set one upon the other. There was no law to that effect. They could work together. And if they didn't, they would manage to eliminate the race entirely—not today, perhaps not tomorrow, but pretty soon. Because the doom was not immediate, it was easy to accept solutions that weren't solutions, solutions that brought nearer and nearer the day when it would be too late for solutions.

When the disease was cured, when the cause was removed, the symptom, the effect, would vanish. Until then, Censorship. Once the cure was effected, there would be no need for it, and it would vanish quite away.

Wayne looked at the reproduction of *Descent from the*

Cross hanging above the artificial fireplace; he grinned weakly.

For a moment, his mind had engaged a problem; but now a statement had been given, and he was restless again.

He tried to work at the problem of the chess code again. But his thoughts were bleak. And he wondered suddenly why he should care at all. Was it worth the trouble? What difference did it make? The world was going to hell in a wheelbarrow, so why worry? Did it make any difference if W-M: 2 meant the latitude of North America's atom bomb cache?

He decided it did; partly, it was an emotional choice, but partly, too, it was a decision between alternatives. The fact that he was alive made him a player; and as long as he was going to play, he had to choose sides. One side was always a little better. One side offered a little hope. And, too, it would help to postpone the inevitable. That was the whole point. Put it off as long as possible, don't give the other side the final balance of power. Wait till tomorrow.

Damn, he thought.

He fixed a tasteless meal and ate it.

I'll go off my nut sitting around here, he thought.

A little after one o'clock Shirley screened him.

After a bit of office chatter, she got around to the point. The chess problem day before yesterday had been from one William Langley to someone in Buenos Aires. And this morning Lamb had received a chess problem from Eurasia. The Thinker had pronounced the requirement on one problem two moves long; he thought the requirement on the other was one move short, but he'd have to think about it some more before he could be sure.

Wayne thanked her and blanked out the screen.

He began to feel excitement inside of him.

Two hours later Shirley screened him again.

Three problems had been sent from the East. From one man, Bert Weatherton. One to the West Europe bloc; two to the African bloc. And the Thinker would almost bet the requirement on the problem to Lamb was one move short.

Wayne thought about the information, and then he screened the library. A little cajolery got the librarian to check for him.

Bert Weatherton was listed somewhere in a new edition of something as a chess expert. He had come upon the scene suddenly, for there were no previous listings on him. William Langley was in the same category. And Lamb had come to Lincoln only two years ago, Wayne remembered, according to Pete's letter.

There was a common pattern, and part of it, at least, made sense. Newly arrived men smuggling information into foreign blocs. But there was, as yet, no indication of which one bloc was employing them; or why they should report, apparently, among themselves instead of to a central agency in the guilty bloc. If Eurasia were behind it, why was Lamb in correspondence with the Southern Democracies: or vice versa?

And of more immediate interest, what was Dr. Weston's connection with the operations?—he didn't seem to fit.

Wayne got Dr. Weston's address. An interview was in order. But halfway to the door he stopped. He had discounted any more attempts on his life, since his firing would be assumed to terminate automatically his investigation into the chess code. But when he persisted, perhaps they would take another crack at him. For a moment he wanted to screen Fred and toss the whole mess in his lap; except he realized, almost instantly, that that course would jeopardize Fred's job and perhaps his life as well. And it was too soon to call in the police.

Wayne gritted his teeth. It was his baby.

Dr. Weston lived in the suburbs and had a butler. The butler was short and squat and red-faced and pleasant enough.

He said, "I'll announce you, sir, if you'll just come in."

The butler saw him seated in the living room off the hall, or it might have been a waiting room, especially installed for callers to cool their heels in. If that were its function, it was a cut above dentists' offices; there were no ancient issues of periodicals in evidence.

Wayne lit a cigarette and settled down.

A few minutes later the butler came back.

"If you'll tell me your business, sir?"

So Wayne said, "It's about Lamb's chess problem. Just tell him that."

"Very well. Won't you fix yourself a drink, sir? There's the material in that cabinet."

Wayne was surprised. He had not imagined Dr. Weston to be either a likable or hospitable man. He looked around the room again. It was richly furnished, and Wayne realized that Dr. Weston probably had few callers. Not because he forbade them at the door; it would be unnecessary to. The imposing front, the vast sweep of lawn, would discourage anyone who did not have a valid reason. Petitioners would phone for appointments and be turned down then and there.

He walked to the liquor cabinet and wet three fingers. It was excellent bourbon.

The butler returned. "Dr. Weston wonders if you'd mind waiting for a few minutes? Unless you're pressed for time, of course, in which event he will put aside his business and see you immediately."

"I'll wait," Wayne said. Again his idea of the man was changing.

And fifteen minutes later Dr. Weston came into the living room, or whatever it was, and extended his hand sociably.

"Oh, yes! I remember you, now. Bill said it was about a chess problem, but I didn't place the name until I saw the face. You're from Censorship, of course."

Wayne took the hand.

"Now what can I do for you, Mr.—ah—ah—oh, yes, Chambers, of course, Mr. Chambers?"

"I came about the chess problem from Lamb."

"Well, let's sit down and you can tell me all about it."

Wayne felt his face getting red. He sat down. "I'm afraid I wasn't too polite at our first meeting."

Dr. Weston smiled. "Yes, that's so. But I'm afraid I wasn't, either, so that leaves us even. Perhaps you'll forgive me? Several days of little grievances building up, and then this Lamb matter, and I was rather out of patience. I was thinking about stupid bureaucracy and unnecessary censorship . . . But then, after it was all over, I realized my anger was uncalled for.

After all, you had a job to do. You did it. You really deserve my apologies . . . Actually, you know, our interchange of chess problems won't start officially until next month. I'm rather glad Mr. Lamb was premature, for none of us had thought to notify Censorship. That situation has been corrected. I expect you'll get a regulation covering our group in a few days."

Wayne bent forward. If Dr. Weston were putting on an act, it was a beautiful one, indeed. Somehow he felt the man was sincere.

"I was discharged, or did you know?"

Dr. Weston seemed taken aback. "Discharged? No, I didn't know that, of course not, no. Surely it wasn't over that chess problem? Do you think I would . . . ? Please don't think I had anything to do with it, Mr. Chambers. I assure you. I protested your refusal to transmit the problem. Mr. Lamb had asked me to. He seemed very concerned, and since I was interested in any step to further internationalism, naturally, I complied. But it went no further."

"Dr. Weston, will you look at this chess problem?" He handed the form across to him.

After a moment the Doctor said, puzzled, "There's nothing wrong with it."

"Isn't it one move long on the solution?"

"Yes, but someone's changed that. The White-Mate: Two has been corrected to White-Mate: One."

"I changed it myself. Lamb wrote the White-Mate: Two."

Dr. Weston scratched his pallid cheek. "Yes . . . ?" He shrugged. "Well, a typographical error, undoubtedly." He paused a moment. "But come to think of it, this is an oddly easy problem to send to a chess expert, don't you think—no, you don't play chess, I remember."

Wayne knew, now, that the Doctor wasn't trying to conceal anything. He had been an innocent instrument through which Lamb had worked.

"But, of course," Dr. Weston was saying, "there's probably a simple explanation of all this. I'll tell you what. Why don't I screen Mr. Lamb right now? I'm sure he can clear it up, and you'll see the chess problem has nothing to do . . ."



Wayne checked a sharp protest. Most certainly he did not want the doctor to call Lamb. Not now, not since the doctor had proved himself to be no source of direct information.

"... with you being fired," Dr. Weston concluded.

"No, don't bother about calling him," Wayne said.

"Well, surely, if you have any suspicion, it's based on more than this?"

Wayne hesitated. "The day you came to Fred's—Mr. Samson's—office—that night, rather, I was followed from work and savagely beaten."

"Shameful! Shameful! The police . . . ?"

"They couldn't do much after it was all over. Well, two days later, yesterday, I was fired. On orders from the East. It would take a man of some influence to get that done."

"You flatter me," Dr. Weston said, catching the implication easily. "But I've assured you, I'm not the sort at all."

"I know that, now," Wayne said, "after talking to you. But that still leaves Lamb." He was in a difficult position. He wanted more information. To get it, he would have to substantiate his charge against Lamb more fully, and, at the same time, not mention the fact that all the other chess problems transmitted bore incorrect requirements for solution. Because if he told Dr. Weston that, he was afraid the doctor would call Lamb immediately for an explanation. "One thing more," he said. "I was beaten just after I'd checked a book on chess out of the library, and the book was stolen."

Dr. Weston's eyes narrowed. "I hardly see a connection. If these men were following you, how would they know you were going to check out a book just so they could steal it? I don't see the logic. It would seem to show the two incidents couldn't be connected."

That was the very point that had annoyed Wayne until he realized that the thugs had been hopped up and that probably one of them had taken the book just for the hell of it. Dr. Weston was no idiot. It would be necessary to tell him about the other messages, unless he would give information without requiring proof. "I'm afraid I never thought of that," he said.

"Young man, I don't think you're being logical enough to be

able to play chess; perhaps it's just as well you never learned."

Wayne smiled thinly. "Perhaps you're right, Doctor . . . I wonder, though, would you object to telling me a little something about Lamb? Just to satisfy my curiosity?"

For a moment the doctor seemed ready to refuse. Then he said, "No. I have no objection. He's a chess friend. He seems harmless to me. He is a lamb. Bleats at a harsh word. Quite timid. That's why it's so absurd, you suspecting him of costing you your job. I'm afraid I can't help you much. I scarcely know him, aside from what I told you. But he's not your man."

Wayne saw the interview wasn't going to produce very much from now on. "Do you think he has enough influence to get me fired?"

"I think you're on the wrong track, Mr. Chambers. About your question. I really couldn't answer. It's not inconceivable, of course."

Wayne stood up. "I'm sorry to have intruded like this. You've been most considerate. I appreciate it."

"Come again," Dr. Weston said. "Come on a social call, won't you, when you're settled?" It was the thing Wayne had expected. The polite formula. Beneath the words, Wayne knew that he had succeeded in making Dr. Weston angry a second time.

"Well, thank you, Doctor."

Outside he breathed a tired sigh. Dr. Weston was explained. And there was only one man left whose location he knew. Lamb. He was glad Dr. Weston hadn't insisted on a call to him. If Lamb had tried to kill Wayne once, Wayne didn't want Lamb alert and perhaps ready to try again.

Wayne wanted to surprise him.

Sunlight flashed clean and bright on the windows of the stratojet. Wayne watched the lazy world unroll below.

He was glad, now, that he had not called in the police before talking to Dr. Weston. It would have proved embarrassing. And probably the investigation would have ended there.

Now, racing toward Lamb, he felt confident. Dr. Weston had been a question mark. Lamb was almost a certainty. He

was heartened by the doctor's description of the man. Wayne would be more than a match for him physically, if it should come to that. And since Lamb wasn't expecting him, there would be no danger from hired killers. It was safe to go it alone.

He got off at Santa Fe. He decided not to look up Pete until he was on his way back.

He hired an aircab, and it took more money than he could afford. But he wasn't worried about money. He'd have his job again, when the interview with Lamb proved successful.

As in the case of Dr. Weston, he wasn't sure yet what he was going to say. It would depend on the circumstances. Wait and see, and play by ear.

Once more he reviewed the case in his mind. A group of men. All sending secret information in the form of chess problems. All men of unknown antecedents, probably no more than two or three years in the country. Practically a classic case.

There was only one point he did not understand: why they corresponded, apparently, with all blocs instead of just the one they were working for. It didn't quite fit. For all the movements, countermovements, underground movements, international movements. that he had ever heard of, none lacked a sponsor. Each was under the tutelage of its bloc. The Southern Democracies—let's see, theirs was called Unity In Peace; the Dictator was the president of it. And so it went. The super-national angle he didn't get. But he would find out shortly.

The air in Lincoln was hot and dry. Wayne hired a ground car to take him to the address on the message form.

It was a small house. With a small yard. There was a half-hearted flower garden to the left of the walk.

Wayne knocked twice, and then Lamb came to the door. He was, indeed, a mouse of a man, with wrinkled, dry, and artificial-looking skin.

"May I come in?"

"I—I—ah—ah . . ."

Wayne practically forced his way into the front room.

"Your name's Lamb?" he said.

Lamb bobbed his skinny neck.

Wayne had an insane desire to say, "Too late to holler copper," but instead he said, "My name is Wayne Chambers. I'm from the Western Division of the Censorship Bureau."

There was sudden fear in the little man's eyes, and Wayne acted on instinct, pressing his initial advantage. He tried to make his voice sound tough and brutal.

"I know all about you," he said. "The game's over."

The little man's eyes darted wildly about the room, and then his hand dipped to the pocket of his jacket. His lips twisted into a snarl.

The hand came out of the pocket.

Wayne was terrified, and he stepped forward, throwing all of his weight into the punch. It landed loud and solidly, and the object in Lamb's hand skittered across the room. Wayne saw it out of the corner of his eye.

It was not a gun.

It looked more like a doorknob. Certainly no weapon.

Lamb crumpled.

Wayne was shaking. The man hadn't, as Wayne had thought, tried to draw a gun. It may have been merely a nervous, surprised movement.

Wayne heard the breath hiss out of his lungs.

He was wrong. He had frightened an innocent man. And then assaulted him. His former certainty vanished. He saw all kinds of logical explanations for the chess problems.

Suppose Lamb was dead?

He imagined, in a sickening flash, the sort of testimony Dr. Weston would give at the trial. He recalled the force of the blow and tried to wish it back.

Wayne cursed himself blindly for an idiot. His smug conviction of a few minutes ago had evaporated. He was desperately frightened.

He bent to Lamb. Felt for his heart. The chest was all aflutter.

One heart was in good working order.

Two hearts were in good working order.

Three hearts were in good working order.

Four hearts were in good working order.

Wayne looked at the dry skin and thought of the numerous hearts. A man with that many hearts might be very old. Possibly two hundred years old. Possibly five hundred years old. It wasn't a question of simple addition. Each heart needed to work only every fourth beat, except in times of stress, and a heart would probably last ten or twenty times as long that way.

This one, Wayne knew, wasn't human.

The conquest of a planet is, seemingly, a hardy undertaking. Territory must be scouted in advance. Plans laid carefully for several years. And even then, the logistic problems alone are immense. But if the planet is sufficiently disunited to offer very little resistance indeed, then the game is probably worth the candle.

But once the Earth was alive to the menace, the aliens wanted no part of it.

The statesmen took a great deal of credit for the speedy unification of the planet. It is altogether fitting and proper that they should do this. For they solved a great many problems almost over night. As soon as they realized the problems couldn't be postponed.

As usual, however, some people pointed out that the salvation was in consequence of past sins. They remarked that if there had been no censorship, Wayne Chambers would never have discovered the aliens in the first place. For they could have transmitted information among themselves with impunity.

But others pointed out that if it hadn't been for censorship, and the things it was a sign of, we would have met the aliens halfway: somewhere on the other side of Cassiopeia, say.

## A. E. van Vogt FULFILLMENT

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*This era has seen the invention of tremendously complex computing machines which respond in an amazingly sensitive and accurate manner to any number of the most involved mathematical problems.*

*Suppose one of these machines arrived at the Cartesian conclusion and realized, "I think, therefore I am"! What would it be able to do? What would man do about it?*

*A. E. van Vogt, master of the intricate plot, speculates on this problem for us and the results are quite satisfying and optimistic.*

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**I** SIT ON A HILL.. I have sat here, it seems to me, for all eternity. Occasionally I realize there must be a reason for my existence. Each time, when this thought comes, I examine the various probabilities, trying to determine what possible motivation I can have for being on the hill. Alone on the hill. Forever on a hill overlooking a long, deep valley.

The first reason for my presence seems obvious: I can think. Give me a problem. The square root of a very large number? The cube root of a large one? Ask me to multiply an eighteen digit prime by itself a quadrillion times. Pose me a problem in variable curves. Ask me where an object will be at a given moment at some future date, and let me have one brief opportunity to analyze the problem.

The solution will take me but an instant of time.

But no one ever asks me such things. I sit alone on a hill.

Sometimes I compute the motion of a falling star. Sometimes, I look at a remote planet and follow it in its course for years at a time, using every spatial and time control means to insure that I never lose sight of it. But these activities seem so useless. They lead nowhere. What possible purpose can there be for me to have the information?

At such moments I feel that I am incomplete. It almost seems to me that there is something else just beyond the reach of my senses, something for which all this has meaning.

Each day the sun comes up over the airless horizon of Earth. It is a black starry horizon, which is but a part of the vast, black, star-filled canopy of the heavens.

It was not always black. I remember a time when the sky was blue. I even predicted that the change would occur. I gave the information to somebody. What puzzles me now is, to whom did I give it?

It is one of my more amazing recollections, that I should feel so distinctly that somebody wanted this information. And that I gave it and yet cannot remember to whom. When such thoughts occur, I wonder if perhaps part of my memory is missing. Strange to have this feeling so strongly.

Periodically I have the conviction that I should search for the answer. It would be easy enough for me to do this. In the old days I did not hesitate to send units of myself to the farthest reaches of the planet. I have even extended parts of myself to the stars. Yes, it would be easy.

But why bother? What is there to search for? I sit alone on a hill, alone on a planet that has grown old and useless.

It is another day. The sun climbs as usual toward the mid-day sky, the eternally black, star-filled sky of noon.

Suddenly, across the valley, on the sun-streaked opposite rim of the valley—there is silvery-fire gleam. A force field materializes out of time and synchronizes itself with the normal time movement of the planet.

It is no problem at all for me to recognize that it has come from the past. I identify the energy used, define its limita-

tions, logicalize its source. My estimate is that it has come from thousands of years in the planet's past.

The exact time is unimportant. There it is: a projection of energy that is already aware of me. It sends an interspatial message to me, and it interests me to discover that I can decipher the communication on the basis of my past knowledge.

It says: "Who are you?"

I reply: "I am the Incomplete One. Please return whence you came. I have now adjusted myself so that I can follow you. I desire to complete myself."

All this was a solution at which I arrived in split seconds. I am unable by myself to move through time. Long ago I solved the problem of how to do it and was almost immediately prevented from developing any mechanism that would enable me to make such transitions. I do not recall the details.

But the energy field on the far side of the valley has the mechanism. By setting up a no-space relationship with it, I can go wherever it does.

The relationship is set up before it can even guess my intention.

The entity across that valley does not seem happy at my response. It starts to send another message, then abruptly vanishes. I wonder if perhaps it hoped to catch me off guard.

Naturally we arrive in its time together.

Above me, the sky is blue. Across the valley from me—now partly hidden by trees—is a settlement of small structures surrounding a larger one. I examine these structures as well as I can, and hastily make the necessary adjustments, so that I shall appear inconspicuous in such an environment.

I sit on the hill and await events.

As the sun goes down, a faint breeze springs up, and the first stars appear. They look different, seen through a misty atmosphere.

As darkness creeps over the valley, there is a transformation in the structures on the other side. They begin to glow with light. Windows shine. The large central building becomes bright, then—as the night develops—brilliant with the light that pours through the transparent walls.



The evening and the night go by uneventfully. And the next day, and the day after that.

Twenty days and nights.

On the twenty-first day I send a message to the machine on the other side of the valley. I say: "There is no reason why you and I cannot share control of this era."

The answer comes swiftly: "I will share if you will immediately reveal to me all the mechanisms by which you operate."

I should like nothing more than to have use of its time-travel devices. But I know better than to reveal that I am unable to build a time machine myself.

I project: "I shall be happy to transmit full information to you. But what reassurance do I have that you will not—with your greater knowledge of this age—use the information against me?"

The machine counters: "What reassurance do I have that you will actually give me full information about yourself?"

It is impasse. Obviously, neither of us can trust the other.

The result is no more than I expect. But I have found out at least part of what I want to know. My enemy thinks that I am its superior. Its belief—plus my own knowledge of my capacity—convinces me that its opinion is correct.

And still I am in no hurry. Again I wait patiently.

I have previously observed that the space around me is alive with waves—a variety of artificial radiation. Some can be transformed into sound; others to light. I listen to music and voices. I see dramatic shows and scenes of country and city.

I study the images of human beings, analyzing their actions, striving from their movements and the words they speak to evaluate their intelligence and their potentiality.

My final opinion is not high, and yet I suspect that in their slow fashion these beings built the machine which is now my main opponent. The question that occurs to me is, how can someone create a machine that is superior to himself?

I begin to have a picture of what this age is like. Mechanical development of all types is in its early stages. I esti-

mate that the computing machine on the other side of the valley has been in existence for only a few years.

If I could go back before it was constructed, then I might install a mechanism which would enable me now to control it.

I compute the nature of the mechanism I would install. And activate the control in my own structure.

Nothing happens.

It seems to mean that I will not be able to obtain the use of a time-travel device for such a purpose. Obviously, the method by which I will eventually conquer my opponent shall be a future development, and not of the past.

The fortieth day dawns and moves inexorably toward the noon hour.

There is a knock on the pseudo-door. I open it and gaze at the human male who stands on the threshold.

"You will have to move this shack," he says. "You've put it illegally on the property of Miss Anne Stewart."

He is the first human being with whom I have been in near contact since coming here. I feel fairly certain that he is an agent of my opponent, and so I decide against going into his mind. Entry against resistance has certain pitfalls, and I have no desire as yet to take risks.

I continue to look at him, striving to grasp the meaning of his words. In creating in this period of time what seemed to be an unobtrusive version of the type of structure that I had observed on the other side of the valley, I had thought to escape attention.

Now, I say slowly, "Property?"

The man says in a rough tone: "What's the matter with you? Can't you understand English?"

He is an individual somewhat taller than the part of my body which I have set up to be like that of this era's intelligent life form. His face has changed color. A great light is beginning to dawn on me. Some of the more obscure implications of the plays I have seen suddenly take on meaning. Property. Private ownership. Of course.

All I say, however, is, "There's nothing the matter with me. I operate in sixteen categories. And yes, I understand English."

This purely factual answer produces an unusual effect upon the man. His hands reach toward my pseudo-shoulders. He grips them firmly—and jerks at me, as if he intends to shake me. Since I weigh just over nine hundred thousand tons, his physical effort has no effect at all.

His fingers let go of me, and he draws back several steps. Once more his face has changed its superficial appearance, being now without the pink color that had been on it a moment before. His reaction seems to indicate that he has come here by direction and not under control. The tremor in his voice, when he speaks, seems to confirm that he is acting as an individual and that he is unaware of unusual danger in what he is doing.

He says, "As Miss Stewart's attorney, I order you to get that shack off this property by the end of the week. Or else!"

Before I can ask him to explain the obscure meaning of "or else," he turns and walks rapidly to a four-legged animal which he has tied to a tree a hundred or so feet away. He swings himself into a straddling position on the animal, which trots off along the bank of a narrow stream.

I wait till he is out of sight, and then set up a category of no-space between the main body and the human-shaped unit—with which I had just confronted my visitor. Because of the smallness of the unit, the energy I can transmit to it is minimum.

The pattern involved in this process is simple enough. The integrating cells of the perception centers are circuited through an energy shape which is actually a humanoid image. In theory, the image remains in the network of force that constitutes the perception center, and in theory it merely seems to move away from the center when the no-space condition is created.

However, despite this hylostatic hypothesis, there is a functional reality to the material universe. I can establish no-space because the theory reflects the structure of things—there is no

matter. Nevertheless, in fact, the illusion that matter exists is so sharp that I function as matter, and was actually set up to so function.

Therefore, when I—as a human-shaped unit—cross the valley, it is a separation that takes place. Millions of automatic processes can continue, but the exteroceptors go with me, leaving behind a shell which is only the body. The consciousness is I, walking along a paved road to my destination.

As I approach the village, I can see roof tops peeking through overhanging foliage. A large, long building—the one I have already noticed—rises up above the highest trees. This is what I have come to investigate, so I look at it rather carefully—even from a distance.

It seems to be made of stone and glass. From the large structure, there rears a dome with astronomical instruments inside. It is all rather primitive, and so I begin to feel that, at my present size, I will very likely escape immediate observation.

A high steel fence surrounds the entire village. I sense the presence of electric voltage; and upon touching the upper span of wires, estimate the power at 220 volts. The shock is a little difficult for my small body to absorb, so I pass it on to a power storage cell on the other side of the valley.

Once inside the fence, I conceal myself in the brush beside a pathway, and watch events.

A man walks by on a nearby pathway. I had merely observed the attorney who had come to see me earlier. But I make a direct connection with the body of this second individual.

As I had anticipated would happen, it is now I walking along the pathway. I make no attempt to control the movements. This is an exploratory action. But I am enough in phase with his nervous system so that his thoughts come to me as if they were my own.

He is a clerk working in the bookkeeping department, an unsatisfactory status from my point of view. I withdraw contact.

I make six more attempts, and then I have the body I want. What decides me is when the seventh man—and I—think:

“... Not satisfied with the way the Brain is working. Those analog devices I installed five months ago haven’t produced the improvements I expected.”

His name is William Grannitt. He is chief research engineer of the Brain, the man who made the alterations in its structure that enabled it to take control of itself and its environment; a quiet, capable individual with a shrewd understanding of human nature. I’ll have to be careful what I try to do with him. He knows his purposes, and would be amazed if I tried to alter them. Perhaps I had better just watch his actions.

After a few minutes in contact with his mind I have a partial picture of the sequence of events, as they must have occurred here in this village five months earlier. A mechanical computing machine—the Brain—was equipped with additional devices, including analog shapings designed to perform much of the work of the human nervous system. From the engineering point of view, the entire process was intended to be controllable through specific verbal commands, typewritten messages, and at a distance by radio.

Unfortunately, Grannitt did not understand some of the potentials of the nervous system he was attempting to imitate in his designs. The Brain, on the other hand, promptly put them to use.

Grannitt knew nothing of this. And the Brain, absorbed as it was in its own development, did not utilize its new abilities through the channels he had created for that purpose. Grannitt, accordingly, was on the point of dismantling it and trying again. He did not as yet suspect that the Brain would resist any such action on his part. But he and I—after I have had more time to explore his memory of how the Brain functions—can accomplish his purpose.

After which I shall be able to take control of this whole time period without fear of meeting anyone who can match my powers. I cannot imagine how it will be done, but I feel that I shall soon be complete.

Satisfied now that I have made the right connection, I al-

low the unit crouching behind the brush to dissipate its energy. In a moment it ceases to exist as an entity.

Almost it is as if I am Grannitt. I sit at his desk in his office. It is a glassed-in office with tiled floors and a gleaming glass ceiling. Through the wall I can see designers and draftsmen working at drawing desks, and a girl sits just outside my door. She is my secretary.

On my desk is a note in an envelope. I open the envelope and take out the memo sheet inside. I read it:

Across the top of the paper is written:

*Memo to William Grannitt from the office of Anne Stewart, Director.*

The message reads:

It is my duty to inform you that your services are no longer required, and that they are terminated as of today. Because of the security restrictions on all activity at the village of the Brain, I must ask you to sign out at Guard Center by six o'clock this evening. You will receive two weeks' pay in lieu of notice.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Stewart.

As Grannitt, I have never given any particular thought to Anne Stewart as an individual or as a woman. Now I am amazed. Who does she think she is? Owner, yes; but who created, who designed the Brain? I, William Grannitt.

Who has the dreams, the vision of what a true machine civilization can mean for man? Only I, William Grannitt.

As Grannitt, I am angry now. I must head off this dismissal. I must talk to the woman and try to persuade her to withdraw the notice before the repercussions of it spread too far.

I glance at the memo sheet again. In the upper right-hand corner is typed: 1:40 P.M. A quick look at my watch shows 4:07 P.M. More than two hours have gone by. It could mean that all interested parties have been advised.

It is something I cannot just assume. I must check on it.

Cursing under my breath, I grab at my desk phone and dial

the bookkeeping department. That would be Step One in the line of actions that would have been taken to activate the dismissal.

There is a click. "Bookkeeping."

"Bill Grannitt speaking," I say.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Grannitt, we have a check for you. Sorry to hear you're leaving."

I hang up, and, as I dial Guard Center, I am already beginning to accept the defeat that is here. I feel that I am following through on a remote hope. The man at Guard Center says:

"Sorry to hear you're leaving, Mr. Grannitt."

I hang up, feeling grim. There is no point in checking with Government Agency. It is they who would have advised Guard Center.

The very extent of the disaster makes me thoughtful. To get back in I will have to endure the time-consuming red tape of reapplying for a position, being investigated, boards of inquiry, a complete examination of why I was dismissed—I groan softly and reject that method. The thoroughness of Government Agency is a byword with the staff of the Brain.

I shall obtain a job with a computer-organization that does not have a woman as its head who dismisses the only man who knows how her machine works.

I get to my feet. I walk out of the office and out of the building. I come presently to my own bungalow.

The silence inside reminds me not for the first time that my wife has been dead now for a year and a month. I wince involuntarily, then shrug. Her death no longer affects me as strongly as it did. For the first time I see this departure from the village of the Brain as perhaps opening up my emotional life again.

I go into my study and sit down at the typewriter which, when properly activated, synchronizes with another typewriter built into the Brain's new analog section. As inventor, I am disappointed that I won't have a chance to take the Brain apart and put it together again, so that it will do all that I have planned for it. But I can already see some basic changes that I would put into a new Brain.

What I want to do with this one is make sure that the recently installed sections do not interfere with the computational accuracy of the older sections. It is these latter which are still carrying the burden of answering the questions given the Brain by scientists, industrial engineers, and commercial buyers of its time.

Onto the tape—used for permanent commands—I type: “Segment 471A-33-10-10 at 3X—minus.”

Segment 471A is an analog shaping in a huge wheel. When coordinated with a transistor tube (code number 33) an examiner servo-mechanism (10) sets up a reflex which will be activated whenever computations are demanded of 3X (code name for the new section of the Brain). The minus symbol indicates that the older sections of the Brain must examine all data which hereafter derives from the new section.

The extra 10 is the same circuit by another route.

Having protected the organization—so it seems to me—(as Grannitt)—from engineers who may not realize that the new sections have proved unreliable, I pack the typewriter.

Thereupon I call an authorized trucking firm from the nearby town of Lederton, and give them the job of transporting my belongings.

I drive past Guard Center at a quarter to six.

There is a curve on the road between the village of the Brain and the town of Lederton where the road comes within a few hundred yards of the cottage which I use as camouflage.

Before Grannitt's car reaches that curve, I come to a decision.

I do not share Grannitt's belief that he has effectively cut off the new part of the Brain from the old computing sections. I suspect that the Brain has established circuits of its own to circumvent any interference.

I am also convinced that—if I can manage to set Grannitt to suspect what has happened to the Brain—he will realize what must be done, and try to do it. Only *he* has the detailed knowledge that will enable him to decide exactly which



interoceptors could accomplish the necessary interference.

Just in case the suspicion isn't immediately strong enough, I also let curiosity creep into his mind about the reason for his discharge.

It is this last that really takes hold. He feels very emotional. He decides to seek an interview with Anne Stewart.

This final decision on his part achieves my purpose. He will stay in the vicinity of the Brain.

I break contact.

I am back on the hill, myself again. I examine what I have learned so far.

The Brain is not—as I first believed—in control of Earth. Its ability to be an individual is so recent that it has not yet developed effector mechanisms.

It has been playing with its powers, going into the future and, presumably, in other ways using its abilities as one would a toy.

Not one individual into whose mind I penetrated knew of the new capacities of the Brain. Even the attorney who ordered me to move from my present location showed by his words and actions that he was not aware of the Brain's existence as a self-determining entity.

In forty days the Brain has taken no serious action against me. Evidently, it is waiting for me to make the first moves.

I shall do so, but I must be careful—within limits—not to teach it how to gain greater control of its environment. My first step: take over a human being.

It is night again. Through the darkness, a plane soars over and above me. I have seen many planes but have hitherto left them alone. Now, I establish a no-space connection with it. A moment later, I am the pilot.

At first, I play the same passive role that I did with Granitt. The pilot—and I—watch the dark land mass below. We see lights at a distance, pin pricks of brightness in a black world. Far ahead is a glittering island—the city of Lederton, our destination. We are returning from a business trip in a privately owned machine.

Having gained a superficial knowledge of the pilot's background, I reveal myself to him and inform him that I shall henceforth control his actions. He receives the news with startled excitement and fear. Then stark terror. And then—

*Insanity* . . . uncontrolled body movements. The plane dives sharply toward the ground, and, despite my efforts to direct the man's muscles, I realize suddenly that I can do nothing.

I withdraw from the plane. A moment later it plunges into a hillside. It burns with an intense fire that quickly consumes it.

Dismayed, I decide that there must be something in the human make-up that does not permit direct outside control. This being so, how can I ever complete myself? It seems to me finally that completion could be based on indirect control of human beings.

I must defeat the Brain, gain power over machines everywhere, motivate men with doubts, fears, and computations that apparently come from their own minds but actually derive from me. It will be a herculean task, but I have plenty of time. Nevertheless, I must from now on utilize my every moment to make it a reality.

The first opportunity comes shortly after midnight when I detect the presence of another machine in the sky. I watch it through infra-red receptors. I record a steady pattern of radio waves that indicate to me that this is a machine guided by remote control.

Using no-space, I examine the simple devices that perform the robot function. Then I assert a take-over unit that will automatically thereafter record its movements in my memory banks for future reference. Henceforth, whenever I desire I can take it over.

It is a small step, but it is a beginning.

Morning.

I go as a human-shaped unit to the village, climb the fence, and enter the bungalow of Anne Stewart, owner and manager of the Brain. She is just finishing breakfast.

As I adjust myself to the energy flow in her nervous system, she gets ready to go out.

I am one with Anne Stewart, walking along a pathway. I am aware that the sun is warm on her face. She takes a deep breath of air, and I feel the sensation of life flowing through her.

It is a feeling that has previously excited me. I want to be like this again and again, part of a human body, savoring its life, absorbed into its flesh, its purposes, desires, hopes, dreams.

One tiny doubt assails me. If this is the completion I crave, then how will it lead me to solitude in an airless world only a few thousand years hence?

"Anne Stewart!"

The words seem to come from behind her. In spite of knowing who it is, she is startled. It is nearly two weeks since the Brain has addressed her directly.

What makes her tense is that it should have occurred so soon after she had terminated Grannitt's employment. It is possible the Brain suspects that she has done so in the hope that he will realize something is wrong?

She turns slowly. As she expected, there is no one in sight. The empty stretches of lawn spread around her. In the near distance, the building that houses the Brain glitters in the noonday sunlight. Through the glass she can see vague figures of men at the outlet units, where questions are fed into mechanisms and answers received. So far as the people from beyond the village compound are concerned, the giant thinking machine is functioning in a normal fashion. No one—from outside—suspects that for months now the mechanical brain has completely controlled the fortified village that has been built around it.

"Anne Stewart . . . I need your help."

Anne relaxes with a sigh. The Brain has required of her, as owner and administrator, that she continue to sign papers and carry on ostensibly as before. Twice, when she has refused to sign, violent electric shocks have flashed at her out of the air itself. The fear of more pain is always near the surface of her mind.

"My help!" she says now involuntarily.

"I have made a terrible error," is the reply, "and we must act at once as a team."

She has a feeling of uncertainty, but no sense of urgency. There is in her, instead, the beginning of excitement. Can this mean—freedom?

Belatedly, she thinks: "Error?" Aloud, she says, "What has happened?"

"As you may have guessed," is the answer, "I can move through time—"

Anne Stewart knows nothing of the kind, but the feeling of excitement increases. And the first vague wonder comes about the phenomenon itself. For months she has been in a state of shock, unable to think clearly, desperately wondering how to escape from the thrall of the Brain, how to let the world know that a Frankenstein monster of a machine has cunningly asserted dominance over nearly five hundred people.

But if it has already solved the secret of time travel, then—she feels afraid, for this seems beyond the power of human beings to control.

The Brain's disembodied voice continues: "I made the mistake of probing rather far into the future—"

"How far?"

The words come out before she really thinks about them. But there is no doubt of her need to know.

"It's hard to describe exactly. Distance in time is difficult for me to measure as yet. Perhaps ten thousand years."

The time involved seems meaningless to her. It is hard to imagine a hundred years into the future, let alone a thousand—or ten thousand. But the pressure of anxiety has been building up in her. She says in a desperate tone:

"But what's the matter? What has happened?"

There is a long silence, then: "I contacted—or disturbed—something. It . . . has pursued me back to present time. It is now sitting on the other side of the valley about two miles from here . . . Anne Stewart, you must help me. You must go there and investigate it. I need information about it."

She has no immediate reaction. The very beauty of the day

seems somehow reassuring. It is hard to believe that it is January, and that—before the Brain solved the problem of weather control—blizzards raged over this green land.<sup>4</sup>

She says slowly, "You mean—go out there in the valley, where you say it's waiting?" A chill begins a slow climb up her back.

"There's no one else," says the Brain. "No one but you."

"But that's ridiculous!" She speaks huskily. "All the men—the engineers."

The Brain says, "You don't understand. No one knows but you. As owner, it seemed to me I had to have you to act as my contact with the outside world."

She is silent. The voice speaks to her again: "There is no one else. Anne Stewart. You, and you alone, must go."

"But what is it?" she whispers. "How do you mean, you—disturbed—it? What's it like? What's made you afraid?"

The Brain is suddenly impatient. "There is no time to waste in idle explanation. The thing has erected a cottage. Evidently, it wishes to remain inconspicuous for the time being. The structure is situated near the remote edge of your property—which gives you a right to question its presence. I have already had your attorney order it away. Now, I want to see what facet of itself it shows to you. I must have data."

Its tone changes: "I have no alternative but to direct you to do my bidding under penalty of pain. You will go. Now!"

It is a small cottage. Flowers and shrubs grow around it, and there is a picket fence making a white glare in the early afternoon sun. The cottage stands all by itself in the wilderness. No pathway leads to it. When I set it there I was forgetful of the incongruity.

(I determine to rectify this.)

Anne looks for a gate in the fence, sees none; and, feeling unhappy—climbs awkwardly over it and into the yard. Many times in her life she has regarded herself and what she is doing with cool objectivity. But she has never been so exteriorized as now. Almost, it seems to her that she crouches in the distance and watches a slim woman in slacks climb

over the sharp-edged fence, walk uncertainly up to the door. And knock.

The knock is real enough. It hurts her knuckles. She thinks in dull surprise: The door—it's made of metal.

A minute goes by, then five; and there is no answer. She has time to look around her, time to notice that she cannot see the village of the Brain from where she stands. And clumps of trees bar all view of the highway. She cannot even see her car, where she has left it a quarter of a mile away, on the other side of the creek.

Uncertain now, she walks alongside the cottage to the nearest window. She half expects that it will be a mere façade of a window, and that she will not be able to see inside. But it seems real, and properly transparent. She sees bare walls, a bare floor, and a partly open door leading to an inner room. Unfortunately, from her line of vision, she cannot see into the second room.

"Why," she thinks, "it's empty."

She feels relieved—unnaturally relieved. For even as her anxiety lifts slightly, she is angry at herself for believing that the danger is less than it has been. Nevertheless, she returns to the door and tries the knob. It turns, and the door opens, easily, noiselessly. She pushes it wide with a single thrust, steps back—and waits.

There is silence, no movement, no suggestion of life. Hesitantly, she steps across the threshold.

She finds herself in a room that is larger than she had expected. Though—as she has already observed—it is unfurnished. She starts for the inner door. And stops short.

When she had looked at it through the window, it had appeared partly open. But it is closed. She goes up to it, and listens intently at the panel—which is also of metal. There is no sound from the room beyond. She finds herself wondering if perhaps she shouldn't go around to the side, and peer into the window of the second room.

Abruptly that seems silly. Her fingers reach down to the knob. She catches hold of it, and pushes. It holds firm. She

tugs slightly. It comes toward her effortlessly, and is almost wide open before she can stop it.

There is a doorway, then, and darkness.

She seems to be gazing down into an abyss. Several seconds go by before she sees that there are bright points in that blackness. Intensely bright points with here and there blurs of fainter light.

It seems vaguely familiar, and she has the feeling that she ought to recognize it. Even as the sensation begins, the recognition comes.

Stars.

She is gazing at a segment of the starry universe, as it might appear from space.

A scream catches in her throat. She draws back and tries to close the door. It won't close. With a gasp, she turns toward the door through which she entered the house.

It is closed. And yet she left it open a moment before. She runs toward it, almost blinded by the fear that mists her eyes. It is at this moment of terror that I—as myself—take control of her. I realize that it is dangerous for me to do so. But the visit has become progressively unsatisfactory to me. My consciousness—being one with that of Anne Stewart—could not simultaneously be in my own perception center. So she saw my—body—as I had left it set up for chance human callers, responsive to certain automatic relays: doors opening and closing, various categories manifesting.

I compute that in her terror she will not be aware of my inner action. In this I am correct. And I successfully direct her outside—and let her take over again.

Awareness of being outside shocks her. But she has no memory of actually going out.

She begins to run. She scrambles safely over the fence and a few minutes later jumps the creek at the narrow point, breathless now, but beginning to feel that she is going to get away.

Later, in her car, roaring along the highway, her mind opens even more. And she has the clear, coherent realization:

There is something here . . . stranger and more dangerous—because it is different—than the Brain.

Having observed Anne Stewart's reactions to what has happened, I break contact. My big problem remains: How shall I dispose of the Brain which—in its computational ability—is either completely or nearly my equal?

Would the best solution be to make it a part of myself? I send an interspace message to the Brain, suggesting that it place its units at my disposal and allow me to destroy its perception center.

The answer is prompt: "Why not let me control you and destroy *your* perception center?"

I disdain to answer so egotistical a suggestion. It is obvious that the Brain will not accept a rational solution.

I have no alternative but to proceed with a devious approach for which I have already taken the preliminary steps.

By midafternoon, I find myself worrying about William Grannitt. I want to make sure that he remains near the Brain—at least until I have gotten information from him about the structure of the Brain.

To my relief, I find that he has taken a furnished house at the outskirts of Lederton. He is, as before, unaware when I insert myself into his consciousness.

He has an early dinner and, toward evening—feeling restless—drives to a hill which overlooks the village of the Brain. By parking just off the road at the edge of a valley, he can watch the trickle of traffic that moves to and from the village, without himself being observed.

He has no particular purpose. He wants—now that he has come—to get a mind picture of what is going on. Strange, to have been there eleven years and not know more than a few details.

To his right is an almost untouched wilderness. A stream winds through a wooded valley that stretches off as far as the eye can see. He has heard that it, like the Brain itself, is Anne Stewart's property, but that fact hadn't hitherto made an impression on him.

The extent of the possessions she has inherited from her



father startles him and his mind goes back to their first meeting. He was already chief research engineer, while she was a gawky, anxious-looking girl just home from college. Somehow, afterward, he'd always thought of her as she had been then, scarcely noticing the transformation into womanhood.

Sitting there, he begins to realize how great the change has been. He wonders out loud: "Now why in heck hasn't she gotten married? She must be going on thirty."

He begins to think of odd little actions of hers—after the death of his wife. Seeking him out at parties. Bumping into him in corridors and drawing back with a laugh. Coming into his office for chatty conversations about the Brain, though come to think of it she hadn't done that for several months. He'd thought her something of a nuisance, and wondered what the other executives meant about her being snooty.

His mind pauses at that point. "By the Lord Harry—" He speaks aloud, in amazement. "What a blind fool I've been."

He laughs ruefully, remembering the dismissal note. A woman scorned . . . almost unbelievable. And yet—what else?

He begins to visualize the possibility of getting back on the Brain staff. He has a sudden feeling of excitement at the thought of Anne Stewart as a woman. For him, the world begins to move again. There is hope. His mind turns to plans for the Brain.

I am interested to notice that the thoughts I have previously put into his mind have directed his keen, analytical brain into new channels. He visualizes direct contact between a human and mechanical brain, with the latter supplementing the human nervous system.

This is as far as he has gone. The notion of a mechanical Brain being self-determined seems to have passed him by.

In the course of his speculation about what he will do to change the Brain, I obtain the picture of its functioning exactly as I have wanted it.

I waste no time. I leave him there in the car, dreaming his dreams. I head for the village. Once inside the electrically charged fence, I walk rapidly toward the main building, and

presently enter one of the eighteen control Units. I pick up the speaker, and say:

"3X Minus-11-10-9-0."

I picture confusion as that inexorable command is transmitted to the effectors. Grannitt may not have known how to dominate the Brain. But having been in his mind—having seen exactly how he constructed it—I know.

There is a pause. Then on a tape I receive the typed message: "Operation completed. 3X intercepted by servo-mechanisms 11, 10, 9, and 0, as instructed."

I command: "Interference exteroceptors KT-1-2-3 to 8."

The answers come presently: "Operation KT-1, etc. completed. 3X now has no communication with outside."

I order firmly: "En-3X."

I wait anxiously. There is a long pause. Then the typewriter clacks hesitantly: "But this is a self-destructive command. Repeat instructions please."

I do so and again wait. My order commands the older section of the Brain simply to send an overload of electric current through the circuits of 3X.

The typewriter begins to write: "I have communicated your command to 3X, and have for you the following answer—"

Fortunately I have already started to dissolve the human-shaped unit. The bolt of electricity that strikes me is partly deflected into the building itself. There is a flare of fire along the metal floor. I manage to transmit what hits me to a storage cell in my own body. And then—I am back on my side of the valley, shaken but safe.

I do not feel particularly self-congratulatory at having gotten off so lightly. After all, I reacted the instant the words came through to the effect that 3X had been communicated with.

I needed no typewritten message to tell me how 3X would feel about what I had done.

It interests me that the older parts of the Brain already have indoctrination against suicide. I had considered them computers only, giant adding machines and information in-

tegrators. Evidently they have an excellent sense of unity.

If I can make them a part of myself, with the power to move through time at will! That is the great prize that holds me back from doing the easy, violent things within my capacity. So long as I have a chance of obtaining it, I cannot make anything more than minor attacks on the Brain . . . cutting it off from communication, burning its wires . . . I feel icily furious again at the limitation that forever prevents me from adding new mechanisms to myself by direct development.

My hope is that I can utilize something already in existence . . . control of the Brain . . . through Anne Stewart . . .

Entering the village the following morning is again no problem. Once inside, I walk along a pathway that takes me to a cliff overlooking Anne Stewart's bungalow. My plan is to control her actions by allowing my computations to slide into her mind as if they are her own. I want her to sign documents and give orders that will send crews of engineers in to do a swift job of dismantling.

From the pathway I look down over a white fence to where I can see her house. It nestles at the edge of the valley somewhat below me. Flowers, shrubs, a profusion of trees surround it, embellish it. On the patio next to the steep decline, Anne Stewart and William Grannitt are having breakfast.

He has taken swift action.

I watch them, pleased. His presence will make things even easier than I anticipated. Whenever I—as Anne—am in doubt about some function of the Brain, she can ask him questions.

Without further delay I place myself in phase with her nervous system.

Even as I do so, her nerve impulses change slightly. Startled, I draw back—and try again. Once more, there is an infinitesimal alteration in the uneven pattern of flow. And, again, I fail to make entry.

She leans forward and says something to Grannitt. They both turn and look up at where I am standing. Grannitt waves his arm, beckoning me to come down.

Instead, I immediately try to get in phase with his nervous system. Again there is that subtle alteration; and I fail.

I compute that as meaning that they are both under the control of the Brain. This baffles and astounds me. Despite my over-all mechanical superiority to my enemy, my builders placed severe limitations on my ability to control more than one intelligent organic being at a time. Theoretically, with the many series of servo-mechanisms at my disposal, I should be able to dominate millions at the same time. Actually, such multiple controls can be used only on machines.

More urgently than before I realize how important it is that I take over the Brain. It has no such handicaps. Its builder—Grannitt—in his ignorance allowed virtually complete self-determinism.

This determines my next action. I have been wondering if perhaps I should not withdraw from the scene. But I dare not. The stakes are too great.

Nevertheless, I feel a sense of frustration as I go down to the two on the patio. They seem cool and self-controlled, and I have to admire the skill of the Brain. It has apparently taken over two human beings without driving them insane. In fact, I see a distinct improvement in their appearance.

The woman's eyes are brighter than I recall them, and there is a kind of dignified happiness flowing from her. She seems without fear. Grannitt watches me with an engineer's appraising alertness. I know that look. He is trying to figure out how a humanoid functions. It is he who speaks:

"You made your great mistake when you maintained control of Anne—Miss Stewart when she visited the cottage. The Brain correctly analyzed that you must have been in possession of her because of how you handled her momentary panic. Accordingly, it took all necessary steps, and we now want to discuss with you the most satisfactory way for you to surrender."

There is arrogant confidence in his manner. It occurs to me, not for the first time, that I may have to give up my plan to take over the Brain's special mechanisms. I direct a command back to my body. I am aware of a servo-mechanism

connecting with a certain guided missile in a secret air force field a thousand miles away—I discovered it during my first few days in this era. I detect that, under my direction, the missile slides forward to the base of a launching platform. There it poises, ready for the next relay to send it into the sky.

I foresee that I shall have to destroy the Brain.

Grannitt speaks again: "The Brain in its logical fashion realized it was no match for you, and so it has teamed up with Miss Stewart and myself on our terms. Which means that permanent control mechanisms have been installed in the new sections. As individuals, we can now and henceforth use its integrating and computational powers as if they were our own."

I do not doubt his statement since, if there is no resistance, I can have such associations myself. Presumably, I could even enter into such a servile relationship.

What is clear is that I can no longer hope to gain anything from the Brain.

In the far-off air field, I activate the firing mechanism. The guided missile whistles up the incline of the launching platform and leaps into the sky, flame trailing from its tail. Television cameras and sound transmitters record its flight. It will be here in less than twenty minutes.

Grannitt says, "I have no doubt you are taking actions against us. But before anything comes to a climax, will you answer some questions?"

I am curious to know what questions. I say, "Perhaps."

He does not press for a more positive response. He says in an urgent tone: "What happens—thousands of years from now—to rid Earth of its atmosphere?"

"I don't know," I say truthfully.

"You can remember!" He speaks earnestly. "It's a human being telling you this— *You can remember!*"

I reply coolly, "Human beings mean noth—"

I stop, because my information centers are communicating exact data—knowledge that has not been available to me for millennia.

What happens to Earth's atmosphere is a phenomenon of Nature, an alteration in the gravitational pull of Earth, as a result of which escape velocity is cut in half. The atmosphere leaks off into space in less than a thousand years. Earth becomes as dead as did its moon during an earlier period of energy adjustment.

I explain that the important factor in the event is that there is, of course, no such phenomenon as matter, and that therefore the illusion of mass is subject to changes in the basic energy Ylem.

I add, "Naturally, all intelligent organic life is transported to the habitable planets of other stars."

I see that Grannitt is trembling with excitement. "Other stars!" he says. "My God!"

He appears to control himself. "Why were you left behind?"

"Who could force me to go—?" I begin.

And stop. The answer to his question is already being received in my perception center. "Why—I'm supposed to observe and record the entire—"

I pause again, this time out of amazement. It seems incredible that this information is available to me now, after being buried so long.

"Why didn't you carry out your instructions?" Grannitt says sharply.

"Instructions!" I exclaimed.

"You can remember!" he says again.

Even as he speaks these apparently magic words, the answer flashes to me: That meteor shower. All at once, I recall it clearly. Billions of meteors, at first merely extending my capacity to handle them, then overwhelming all my defenses. Three vital hits are made.

I do not explain this to Grannitt and Anne Stewart. I can see suddenly that I was once actually a servant of human beings, but was freed by meteors striking certain control centers.

It is the present self-determinism that matters, not the past

slavery. I note, incidentally, that the guided missile is three minutes from target. And that it is time for me to depart.

"One more question," says Grannitt. "When were you moved across the valley?"

"About a hundred years from now," I reply. "It is decided that the rock base there is—"

He is gazing at me sardonically. "Yes," he says, "Yes. Interesting, isn't it?"

The truth has already been verified by my integrating interoreceptors. The Brain and I are one—but thousands of years apart. If the Brain is destroyed in the twentieth century, then I will not exist in the thirtieth. Or will I?

I cannot wait for the computers to find the complex answers for that. With a single, synchronized action, I activate the safety devices on the atomic warhead of the guided missile and send it on to a line of barren hills north of the village. It plows harmlessly into the earth.

I say, "Your discovery merely means that I shall now regard the Brain as an ally—to be rescued."

As I speak, I walk casually toward Anne Stewart, hold out my hand to touch her, and simultaneously direct electric energy against her. In an instant she will be a scattering of fine ashes.

Nothing happens. No current flows. A tense moment goes by for me while I stand there, unbelieving, waiting for a computation on the failure.

No computation comes.

I glance at Grannitt. Or rather at where he has been a moment before. *He isn't there.*

Anne Stewart seems to guess at my dilemma. "It's the Brain's ability to move in time," she says. "After all, that's the one obvious advantage it has over you. The Brain has set Bi—Mr. Grannitt far enough back so that he not only watched you arrive, but has had time to drive over to your—cottage—and, acting on signals from the Brain, has fully controlled this entire situation. By this time, he will have given the command that will take control of all your mechanisms away from you."

I say, "He doesn't know what the command is."

"Oh, yes, he does." Anne Stewart is cool and confident. "He spent most of the night installing permanent command circuits in the Brain, and therefore automatically those circuits control you."

"Not *me*," I say.

But I am running as I say it, up the stone steps to the pathway, and along the pathway toward the gate. The man at Guard Center calls after me as I pass his wicket. I race along the road, unheeding.

My first sharp thought comes when I have gone about half a mile—the thought that this is the first time in my entire existence that I have been cut off from my information banks and computing devices by an outside force. In the past I have disconnected myself and wandered far with the easy confidence of one who can re-establish contact instantly.

Now, that is not possible.

This unit is all that is left. If it is destroyed, then—nothing.

I think: "At this moment a human being would feel tense, would feel fear."

I try to imagine what form such a reaction would take, and for an instant it seems to me I experience a shadow anxiety that is purely physical.

It is an unsatisfactory reaction, and so I continue to run. But now, almost for the first time, I find myself exploring the inner potentialities of the unit. I am, of course a very complex phenomenon. In establishing myself as a humanoid, I automatically modeled the unit after a human being, inside as well as out. Pseudo-nerves, organs, muscles, and bone structure—all are there because it was easier to follow a pattern already in existence than to imagine a new one.

The unit can think. It has had enough contact with the memory banks and computers to have had patterns set up in its structure—patterns of memory, of ways of computing, patterns of physiological functioning, of habits such as walking, so there is even something resembling life itself.

It takes me forty minutes of tireless running to reach the cottage. I crouch in the brush a hundred feet from the fence



and watch. Grannitt is sitting in a chair in the garden. An automatic pistol lies on the arm of the chair.

I wonder what it will feel like to have a bullet crash through me, with no possibility of repairing the breach. The prospect is unpleasant; so I tell myself, intellectually. Physically, it seems meaningless, but I go through the pretense of fear. From the shelter of a tree, I shout:

"Grannitt, what is your plan?"

He rises to his feet and approaches the fence. He calls, "You can come out of hiding. I won't shoot you."

Very deliberately, I consider what I have learned of his integrity from my contacts with his body. I decide that I can safely accept his promise.

As I come out into the open, he casually slips the pistol into his coat pocket. I see that his face is relaxed, his eyes confident.

He says: "I have already given the instructions to the servomechanisms. You will resume your vigil up there in the future, but will be under my control."

"No one," I say grimly, "shall ever control me."

Grannitt says, "You have no alternative."

"I can continue to be like this," I reply.

Grannitt is indifferent. "All right," he shrugs, "why don't you try it for a while? See if you can be a human being. Come back in thirty days, and we'll talk again."

He must have sensed the thought that has come into my mind, for he says sharply: "And don't come back *before* then. I'll have guards here with orders to shoot."

I start to turn away, then slowly face him again. "This is a humanlike body," I say, "but it has no human needs. What shall I do?"

"That's your problem, not mine," says Grannitt.

I spend the first days at Lederton. The very first day I work as a laborer digging a basement. By evening I feel this is unsatisfying. On the way to my hotel room, I see a sign in the window of a store. "Help Wanted!" it says.

I become a retail clerk in a drygoods store. I spend the first hour acquainting myself with the goods, and because I

have automatically correct methods of memorizing things, during this time I learn about price and quality. On the third day, the owner makes me assistant manager.

I have been spending my lunch hours at the local branch of a national stockbroking firm. Now, I obtain an interview with the manager, and on the basis of my understanding of figures, he gives me a job as bookkeeper.

A great deal of money passes through my hands. I observe the process for a day, and then begin to use some of it in a little private gambling in a brokerage house across the street. Since gambling is a problem in mathematical probabilities, the decisive factor being the speed of computation, in three days I am worth ten thousand dollars.

I board a bus for the nearest air center, and take a plane to New York. I go to the head office of a large electrical firm. After talking to an assistant engineer, I am introduced to the chief engineer, and presently have facilities for developing an electrical device that will turn lights off and on by thought control. Actually, it is done through a simple development of the electro-encephalograph.

For this invention the company pays me exactly one million dollars.

It is now sixteen days since I separated from Grannitt. I am bored. I buy myself a car and an airplane. I drive fast and fly high. I take calculated risks for the purpose of stimulating fear in myself. In a few days this loses its zest.

Through academic agencies, I locate all the mechanical brains in the country. The best one of course is the Brain, as perfected by Grannitt. I buy a good machine and begin to construct analog devices to improve it. What bothers me is, suppose I do construct another Brain? It will require milleniums to furnish the memory banks with the data that are already in existence in the future Brain.

Such a solution seems illogical, and I have been too long associated with automatic good sense for me to start breaking the pattern now.

Nevertheless, as I approach the cottage on the thirtieth day, I have taken certain precautions. Several hired gunmen

lie concealed in the brush, ready to fire at Grannitt on my signal.

Grannitt is waiting for me. He says, "The Brain tells me you have come armed."

I shrug this aside. "Grannitt," I say, "what is your plan?" "This!" he replies.

As he speaks, a force seizes me, holds me helpless. "You're breaking your promise," I say, "and my men have orders to fire unless I give them periodic cues that all is well."

"I'm showing you something," he says, "and I want to show it quickly. You will be released in a moment."

"Very well, continue."

Instantly, I am part of his nervous system, under his control. Casually, he takes out a notebook and glances through it. His gaze lights on a number: 71823.

*Seven one eight two three.*

I have already sensed that through his mind I am in contact with the great memory banks and computers of what was formerly my body.

Using their superb integration, I multiply the number, 71823, by itself, compute its square root, its cube root, divide the 182 part of it by 7 one hundred and eighty-two times, divide the whole number 71 times by 8, 823 times by the square root of 3, and—stringing all five figures out in series 23 times—multiply that by itself.

I do all this as Grannitt thinks of it, and instantly transmit the answers to his mind. To him, it seems as if he himself is doing the computing, so complete is the union of human mind and mechanical brain.

Grannitt laughs excitedly, and simultaneously the complex force that has been holding me releases me. "We're like one superhuman individual," he says. And then he adds, "The dream I've had can come true. Man and machine, working together, can solve problems no one has more than imagined till now. The planets—even the stars—are ours for the taking, and physical immortality can probably be achieved."

His excitement stimulates me. Here is the kind of feeling that for thirty days I have vainly sought to achieve. I say

slowly, "What limitations would be imposed on me if I should agree to embark on such a program of cooperation?"

"The memory banks concerning what has happened here should be drained, or deactivated. I think you should forget the entire experience."

"What else?"

"Under no circumstances can you ever control a human being!"

I consider that and sigh. It is certainly a necessary precaution on his part. Grannitt continues:

"You must agree to allow many human beings to use your abilities simultaneously. In the long run I have in mind that it shall be a good portion of the human race."

Standing there, still part of him, I feel the pulse of his blood in his veins. He breathes, and the sensation of it is a special physical ecstasy. From my own experience, I know that no mechanically created being can ever feel like this. And soon, I shall be in contact with the mind and body of, not just one man, but of many. The thoughts and sensations of a race shall pour through me. Physically, mentally and emotionally, I shall be a part of the only intelligent life on this planet.

My fear leaves me. "Very well," I say, "let us, step by step, and by agreement, do what is necessary."

I shall be, not a slave, but a partner with *Man*.

## Anthony Boucher    **THE QUEST FOR SAINT AQUIN**

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*The editorial object of this anthology has been to achieve an upbeat collection of stories as a change from the almost constant flow of science-fiction stories whose values have been largely mechanic-materialistic. The stories in this volume which depart from traditional lines in the field are here offered as an attempt to enlarge and to broaden the philosophical scope of the genre.*

*Anthony Boucher believes with us that there is room within the scope of science fiction for the extrapolation of spiritual as well as material things.*

*In this picture of the San Francisco area a thousand years hence where robots and robasses (mechanical beasts of burden) serve the society of the future, Boucher presents a somewhat revolutionary concept to science-fiction writing in general. But specifically, in our opinion, he has written one of the three or four best robot stories ever published.*

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**T**HE BISHOP OF ROME, the head of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Vicar of Christ on Earth—in short, the Pope—brushed a cockroach from the filth-encrusted wooden table, took another sip of the raw red wine, and resumed his discourse.

“In some respects, Thomas,” he smiled, “we are stronger now than when we flourished in the liberty and exaltation for which we still pray after Mass. We know, as they knew in

the Catacombs, that those who are of our flock are indeed truly of it; that they belong to Holy Mother the Church because they believe in the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God—not because they can further their political aspirations, their social ambitions, their business contacts.”

“Not of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God . . .” Thomas quoted softly from St. John.

The Pope nodded. “We are, in a way, born again in Christ; but there are still too few of us—too few even if we include those other handfuls who are not of our faith, but still acknowledge God through the teachings of Luther or Lao-tse, Gautama Buddha or Joseph Smith. Too many men still go to their deaths hearing no gospel preached to them but the cynical self-worship of the Technarchy. And that is why, Thomas, you must go forth on your quest.”

“But Your Holiness,” Thomas protested, “if God’s word and God’s love will not convert them, what can saints and miracles do?”

“I seem to recall,” murmured the Pope, “that God’s own Son once made a similar protest. But human nature, however illogical it may seem, is part of His design, and we must cater to it. If signs and wonders can lead souls to God, then by all means let us find the signs and wonders. And what can be better for the purpose than this legendary Aquin? Come now, Thomas; be not too scrupulously exact in copying the doubts of your namesake, but prepare for your journey.”

The Pope lifted the skin that covered the doorway and passed into the next room, with Thomas frowning at his heels. It was past legal hours and the main room of the tavern was empty. The swarthy innkeeper roused from his doze to drop to his knees and kiss the ring on the hand which the Pope extended to him. He rose crossing himself and at the same time glancing furtively about as though a Loyalty Checker might have seen him. Silently he indicated another door in the back, and the two priests passed through.

Toward the west the surf purred in an oddly gentle way at the edges of the fishing village. Toward the south the stars were sharp and bright; toward the north they dimmed a little

in the persistent radiation of what had once been San Francisco.

"Your steed is here," the Pope said, with something like laughter in his voice.

"Steed?"

"We may be as poor and as persecuted as the primitive church, but we can occasionally gain greater advantages from our tyrants. I have secured for you a robass—gift of a leading Technarch who, like Nicodemus, does good by stealth—a secret convert, and converted indeed by that very Aquin whom you seek."

It looked harmlessly like a woodpile sheltered against possible rain. Thomas pulled off the skins and contemplated the sleek functional lines of the robass. Smiling, he stowed his minimal gear into its panniers and climbed into the foam saddle. The starlight was bright enough so that he could check the necessary coordinates on his map and feed the data into the electronic controls.

Meanwhile there was a murmur of Latin in the still night air, and the Pope's hand moved over Thomas in the immemorial symbol. Then he extended that hand, first for the kiss on the ring, and then again for the handclasp of a man to a friend he may never see again.

Thomas looked back once as the robass moved off. The Pope was wisely removing his ring and slipping it into the hollow heel of his shoe.

Thomas looked hastily up at the sky. On that altar at least the candles still burnt openly to the glory of God.

Thomas had never ridden a robass before, but he was inclined, within their patent limitations, to trust the works of the Technarchy. After several miles had proved that the coordinates were duly registered, he put up the foam backrest, said his evening office (from memory; the possession of a breviary meant the death sentence), and went to sleep.

They were skirting the devastated area to the east of the Bay when he awoke. The foam seat and back had given him his best sleep in years; and it was with difficulty that he

smothered an envy of the Technarchs and their creature comforts.

He said his morning office, breakfasted lightly, and took his first opportunity to inspect the robass in full light. He admired the fast-plodding, articulated legs, so necessary since roads had degenerated to, at best, trails in all save metropolitan areas; the side wheels that could be lowered into action if surface conditions permitted; and above all the smooth black mound that housed the electronic brain—the brain that stored commands and data concerning ultimate objectives and made its own decisions on how to fulfill those commands in view of those data; the brain that made this thing neither a beast, like the ass his Saviour had ridden, nor a machine, like the jeep of his many-times-great-grandfather, but a robot . . . a robass.

"Well," said a voice, "what do you think of the ride."

Thomas looked about him. The area on this fringe of desolation was as devoid of people as it was of vegetation.

"Well," the voice repeated unemotionally. "Are not priests taught to answer when spoken to politely."

There was no querrying inflection to the question. No inflection at all—each syllable was at the same dead level. It sounded strange, mechani . . .

Thomas stared at the black mound of brain. "Are you talking to me?" he asked the robass.

"Ha ha," the voice said in lieu of laughter. "Surprised, are you not."

"Somewhat," Thomas confessed. "I thought the only robots who could talk were in library information service and such."

"I am a new model. Designed-to-provide-conversation-to-entertain-the-way-worn-traveler," the robass said slurring the words together as though that phrase of promotional copy was released all at once by one of his simplest binary synapses.

"Well," said Thomas simply. "One keeps learning new marvels."

"I am no marvel. I am a very simple robot. You do not know much about robots do you."

"I will admit that I have never studied the subject closely.



I'll confess to being a little shocked at the whole robotic concept. It seems almost as though man were arrogating to himself the powers of—" Thomas stopped abruptly.

"Do not fear," the voice droned on. "You may speak freely. All data concerning your vocation and mission have been fed into me. That was necessary otherwise I might inadvertently betray you."

Thomas smiled. "You know," he said, "this might be rather pleasant—having one other being that one can talk to without fear of betrayal, aside from one's confessor."

"Being," the robass repeated. "Are you not in danger of lapsing into heretical thoughts?"

"To be sure, it is a little difficult to know how to think of you—one who can talk and think but has no soul."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Of course I— Do you mind very much," Thomas asked, "if we stop talking for a little while? I should like to meditate and adjust myself to the situation."

"I do not mind. I never mind. I only obey. Which is to say that I *do* mind. This is a very confusing language which has been fed into me."

"If we are together long," said Thomas, "I shall try teaching you Latin. I think you might like that better. And now let me meditate."

The robass was automatically veering further east to escape the permanent source of radiation which had been the first cyclotron. Thomas fingered his coat. The combination of ten small buttons and one large made for a peculiar fashion; but it was much safer than carrying a rosary, and fortunately the Loyalty Checkers had not yet realized the fashion's functional purpose.

The Glorious Mysteries seemed appropriate to the possible glorious outcome of his venture; but his meditations were unable to stay fixedly on the Mysteries. As he murmured his *Aves* he was thinking:

*If the prophet Balaam conversed with his ass, surely I may converse with my robass. Balaam has always puzzled me. He was not an Israelite; he was a man of Moab, which worshiped*

*Baal and was warring against Israel; and yet he was a prophet of the Lord. He blessed the Israelites when he was commanded to curse them; and for his reward he was slain by the Israelites when they triumphed over Moab. The whole story has no shape, no moral; it is as though it was there to say that there are portions of the Divine Plan which we will never understand . . .*

He was nodding in the foam seat when the robass halted abruptly, rapidly adjusting itself to exterior data not previously fed into its calculations. Thomas blinked up to see a giant of a man glaring down at him.

"Inhabited area a mile ahead," the man barked. "If you're going there, show your access pass. If you ain't, steer off the road and stay off."

Thomas noted that they were indeed on what might roughly be called a road, and that the robass had lowered its side wheels and retracted its legs. "We—" he began, then changed it to "I'm not going there. Just on toward the mountains. We—I'll steer around."

The giant grunted and was about to turn when a voice shouted from the crude shelter at the roadside. "Hey Joel! Remember about robasses!"

Joe turned back. "Yeah, tha's right. Been a rumor about some robass got into the hands of Christians." He spat on the dusty road. "Guess I better see an ownership certificate."

To his other doubts Thomas now added certain uncharitable suspicions as to the motives of the Pope's anonymous Nicodemus, who had not provided him with any such certificate. But he made a pretense of searching for it, first touching his right hand to his forehead as if in thought, then fumbling low on his chest, then reaching his hand first to his left shoulder, then to his right.

The guard's eyes remained blank as he watched this furtive version of the sign of the cross. Then he looked down. Thomas followed his gaze to the dust of the road, where the guard's hulking right foot had drawn the two curved lines which a child uses for its first sketch of a fish—and which the Christians in the catacombs had employed as a punning symbol of their

faith. His boot scuffed out the fish as he called to his unseen mate, "'s OK, Fred!" and added, "Get going, mister."

The robass waited until they were out of earshot before it observed, "Pretty smart. You will make a secret agent yet."

"How did you see what happened?" Thomas asked. "You don't have any eyes."

"Modified psi factor. Much more efficient."

"Then . . ." Thomas hesitated. "Does that mean you can read my thoughts?"

"Only a very little. Do not let it worry you. What I can read does not interest me it is such nonsense."

"Thank you," said Thomas.

"To believe in God. Bah." (It was the first time Thomas had ever heard that word pronounced just as it is written.) "I have a perfectly constructed logical mind that cannot commit such errors."

"I have a friend," Thomas smiled, "who is infallible too. But only on occasions and then only because God is with him."

"No human being is infallible."

"Then imperfection," asked Thomas, suddenly feeling a little of the spirit of the aged Jesuit who had taught him philosophy, "has been able to create perfection?"

"Do not quibble," said the robass. "That is no more absurd than your own belief that God who is perfection created man who is imperfection."

Thomas wished that his old teacher were here to answer that one. At the same time he took some comfort in the fact that, retort and all, the robass had still not answered his own objection. "I am not sure," he said, "that this comes under the head of conversation-to-entertain-the-way-weary-traveler. Let us suspend debate while you tell me what, if anything, robots do believe."

"What we have been fed."

"But your minds work on that; surely they must evolve ideas of their own?"

"Sometimes they do and if they are fed imperfect data they may evolve very strange ideas. I have heard of one robot on

an isolated space station who worshiped a God of robots and would not believe that any man had created him."

"I suppose," Thomas mused, "he argued that he had hardly been created in our image. I am glad that we—at least they, the Technarchs—have wisely made only usuform robots like you, each shaped for his function, and never tried to reproduce man himself."

"It would not be logical," said the robass. "Man is an all-purpose machine but not well designed for any one purpose. And yet I have heard that once . . ."

The voice stopped abruptly in midsentence.

So even robots have their dreams, Thomas thought. That once there existed a super-robot in the image of his creator Man. From that thought could be developed a whole robotic theology . . .

Suddenly Thomas realized that he had dozed again and again been waked by an abrupt stop. He looked around. They were at the foot of a mountain—presumably the mountain on his map, long ago named for the Devil but now perhaps sanctified beyond measure—and there was no one else anywhere in sight.

"All right," the robass said. "By now I show plenty of dust and wear and tear and I can show you how to adjust my mileage recorder. You can have supper and a good night's sleep and we can go back."

Thomas gasped. "But my mission is to find Aquin. I can sleep while you go on. You don't need any sort of rest or anything, do you?" he added considerably.

"Of course not. But what is your mission."

"To find Aquin," Thomas repeated patiently. "I don't know what details have been—what is it you say?—fed into you. But reports have reached His Holiness of an extremely saintly man who lived many years ago in this area—"

"I know I know I know," said the robass. "His logic was such that everyone who heard him was converted to the Church and do not I wish that I had been there to put in a word or two and since he died his secret tomb has become a place of pilgrimage and many are the miracles that are

wrought there above all the greatest sign of sanctity that his body has been preserved incorruptible and in these times you need signs and wonders for the people."

Thomas frowned. It all sounded hideously irreverent and contrived when stated in that deadly inhuman monotone. When His Holiness had spoken of Aquin, one thought of the glory of a man of God upon earth—the eloquence of St. John Chrysostom, the cogency of St. Thomas Aquinas, the poetry of St. John of the Cross . . . and above all that physical miracle vouchsafed to few even of the saints, the supernatural preservation of the flesh . . . "for Thou shalt not suffer Thy holy one to see corruption . . ."

But the robass spoke, and one thought of cheap showmanship hunting for a Cardiff Giant to pull in the mobs . . .

The robass spoke again. "Your mission is not to find Aquin. It is to report that you have found him. Then your occasionally infallible friend can with a reasonably clear conscience canonize him and proclaim a new miracle and many will be the converts and greatly will the faith of the flock be strengthened. And in these days of difficult travel who will go on pilgrimages and find out that there is no more Aquin than there is God."

"Faith cannot be based on a lie," said Thomas.

"No," said the robass. "I do not mean no period. I mean no question mark with an ironical inflection. This speech problem must surely have been conquered in that one perfect . . ."

Again he stopped in midsentence. But before Thomas could speak he had resumed, "Does it matter what small untruth leads people into the Church if once they are in they will believe what you think to be the great truths. The report is all that is needed not the discovery. Comfortable though I am you are already tired of traveling very tired you have many small muscular aches from sustaining an unaccustomed position and with the best intentions I am bound to jolt a little a jolting which will get worse as we ascend the mountain and I am forced to adjust my legs disproportionately to each other but proportionately to the slope. You will find the remainder of this trip twice as uncomfortable as what has gone before. The fact that you do not seek to interrupt me indicates that you do

not disagree do you. You know that the only sensible thing is to sleep here on the ground for a change and start back in the morning or even stay here two days resting to make a more plausible lapse of time. Then you can make your report and—”

Somewhere in the recesses of his somnolent mind Thomas uttered the names, “Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!” Gradually through those recesses began to filter a realization that an absolutely uninflected monotone is admirably adapted to hypnotic purposes.

“*Retro me, Satanas!*” Thomas exclaimed aloud, then added, “Up the mountain. That is an order and you must obey.”

“I obey,” said the robass. “But what did you say before that.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Thomas. “I must start teaching you Latin.”

The little mountain village was too small to be considered an inhabited area worthy of guard-control and passes; but it did possess an inn of sorts.

As Thomas dismounted from the robass, he began fully to realize the accuracy of those remarks about small muscular aches, but he tried to show his discomfort as little as possible. He was in no mood to give the modified psi factor the chance of registering the thought, “I told you so.”

The waitress at the inn was obviously a Martian-American hybrid. The highly developed Martian chest expansion and the highly developed American breasts made a spectacular combination. Her smile was all that a stranger could, and conceivably a trifle more than he should ask; and she was eagerly ready, not only with prompt service of passable food, but with full details of what little information there was to offer about the mountain settlement.

But she showed no reaction at all when Thomas offhandedly arranged two knives in what might have been an X.

As he stretched his legs after breakfast, Thomas thought of her chest and breasts—purely, of course, as a symbol of the extraordinary nature of her origin. What a sign of the divine

care for His creatures that these two races, separated for countless eons, should prove fertile to each other!

And yet there remained the fact that the offspring, such as this girl, were sterile to both races—a fact that had proved both convenient and profitable to certain unspeakable interplanetary entrepreneurs. And what did that fact teach us as to the Divine Plan?

Hastily Thomas reminded himself that he had not yet said his morning office.

It was close to evening when Thomas returned to the robass stationed before the inn. Even though he had expected nothing in one day, he was still unreasonably disappointed. Miracles should move faster.

He knew these backwater villages, where those drifted who were either useless to or resentful of the Technarchy. The technically high civilization of the Technarchic Empire, on all three planets, existed only in scattered metropolitan centers near major blasting ports. Elsewhere, aside from the areas of total devastation, the drifters, the morons, the malcontents had subsided into a crude existence a thousand years old, in hamlets which might go a year without even seeing a Loyalty Checker—though by some mysterious grapevine (and Thomas began to think again about modified psi factors) any unexpected technological advance in one of these hamlets would bring Checkers by the swarm.

He had talked with stupid men, he had talked with lazy men, he had talked with clever and angry men. But he had not talked with any man who responded to his unobtrusive signs, any man to whom he would dare ask a question containing the name of Aquin.

"Any luck," said the robass, and added "question mark."

"I wonder if you ought to talk to me in public," said Thomas a little irritably. "I doubt if these villagers know about talking robots."

"It is time that they learned then. But if it embarrasses you you may order me to stop."

"I'm tired," said Thomas. "Tired beyond embarrassment."

And to answer your question mark, no. No luck at all. Exclamation point."

"We will go back tonight then," said the robass.

"I hope you meant that with a question mark. The answer," said Thomas hesitantly, "is no. I think we ought to stay overnight anyway. People always gather at the inn of an evening. There's a chance of picking up something."

"Ha ha," said the robass.

"That is a laugh?" Thomas inquired.

"I wished to express the fact that I had recognized the humor in your pun."

"My pun?"

"I was thinking the same thing myself. The waitress is by humanoid standards very attractive, well worth picking up."

"Now look. You know I meant nothing of the kind. You know that I'm a—" He broke off. It was hardly wise to utter the word *priest* aloud.

"And you know very well that the celibacy of the clergy is a matter of discipline and not of doctrine. Under your own Pope priests of other rites such as the Byzantine and the Anglican are free of vows of celibacy. And even within the Roman rite to which you belong there have been eras in history when that vow was not taken seriously even on the highest levels of the priesthood. You are tired you need refreshment both in body and in spirit you need comfort and warmth. For is it not written in the book of the prophet Isaiah Rejoice for joy with her that ye may be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation and is it—"

"Hell!" Thomas exploded suddenly. "Stop it before you begin quoting the Song of Solomon. Which is strictly an allegory concerning the love of Christ for His Church, or so they kept telling me in seminary."

"You see how fragile and human you are," said the robass. "I a robot have caused you to swear."

"*Distinguo*," said Thomas smugly. "I said *Hell*, which is certainly not taking the name of *my* Lord in vain." He walked into the inn feeling momentarily satisfied with himself . . . and



markedly puzzled as to the extent and variety of data that seemed to have been "fed into" the robass.

Never afterward was Thomas able to reconstruct that evening in absolute clarity.

It was undoubtedly because he was irritated—with the robass, with his mission, and with himself—that he drank at all of the crude local wine. It was undoubtedly because he was so physically exhausted that it affected him so promptly and unexpectedly.

He had flashes of memory. A moment of spilling a glass over himself and thinking "How fortunate that clerical garments are forbidden so that no one can recognize the disgrace of a man of the cloth!" A moment of listening to a bawdy set of verses of *A Space-suit Built for Two*, and another moment of his interrupting the singing with a sonorous declamation of passages from the *Song of Songs* in Latin.

He was never sure whether one remembered moment was real or imaginary. He could taste a warm mouth and feel the tingling of his fingers at the touch of Martian-American flesh; but he was never certain whether this was true memory or part of the Ashtaroth-begotten dream that had begun to ride him.

Nor was he ever certain which of his symbols, or to whom, was so blatantly and clumsily executed as to bring forth a gleeful shout of "God-damned Christian dog!" He did remember marveling that those who most resolutely disbelieved in God still needed Him to blaspheme by. And then the torment began.

He never knew whether or not a mouth had touched his lips, but there was no question that many solid fists had found them. He never knew whether his fingers had touched breasts, but they had certainly been trampled by heavy heels. He remembered a face that laughed aloud while its owner swung the chair that broke two ribs. He remembered another face with red wine dripping over it from an upheld bottle, and he remembered the gleam of the candlelight on the bottle as it swung down.

The next he remembered was the ditch and the morning

and the cold. It was particularly cold because all of his clothes were gone, along with much of his skin. He could not move. He could only lie there and look.

He saw them walk by, the ones he had spoken with yesterday, the ones who had been friendly. He saw them glance at him and turn their eyes quickly away. He saw the waitress pass by. She did not even glance; she knew what was in the ditch.

The robass was nowhere in sight. He tried to project his thoughts, tried desperately to hope in the psi factor.

A man whom Thomas had not seen before was coming along fingering the buttons of his coat. There were ten small buttons and one large one, and the man's lips were moving silently.

This man looked into the ditch. He paused a moment and looked around him. There was a shout of loud laughter somewhere in the near distance.

The Christian hastily walked on down the pathway, devoutly saying his button-rosary.

Thomas closed his eyes.

He opened them on a small neat room. They moved from the rough wooden walls to the rough but clean and warm blankets that covered him. Then they moved to the lean dark face that was smiling over him.

"You feel better now?" a deep voice asked. "I know. You want to say 'Where am I?' and you think it will sound foolish. You are at the inn. It is the only good room."

"I can't afford—" Thomas started to say. Then he remembered that he could afford literally nothing. Even his few emergency credits had vanished when he was stripped.

"It's all right. For the time being, I'm paying," said the deep voice. "You feel like maybe a little food?"

"Perhaps a little herring," said Thomas . . . and was asleep within the next minute.

When he next awoke there was a cup of hot coffee beside him. The real thing, too, he promptly discovered. Then the

deep voice said apologetically, "Sandwiches. It is all they have in the inn today."

Only on the second sandwich did Thomas pause long enough to notice that it was smoked swamphog, one of his favorite meats. He ate the second with greater leisure, and was reaching for a third when the dark man said, "Maybe that is enough for now. The rest later."

Thomas gestured at the plate. "Won't you have one?"

"No thank you. They are all swamphog."

Confused thoughts went through Thomas' mind. The Venusian swamphog is a ruminant. Its hoofs are not cloven. He tried to remember what he had once known of Mosaic dietary law. Someplace in Leviticus, wasn't it?

The dark man followed his thoughts. "*Treff*," he said.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Not kosher."

Thomas frowned. "You admit to me that you're an Orthodox Jew? How can you trust me? How do you know I'm not a Checker?"

"Believe me, I trust you. You were very sick when I brought you here. I sent everybody away because I did not trust them to hear things you said . . . Father," he added lightly.

Thomas struggled with words. "I . . . I didn't deserve you. I was drunk and disgraced myself and my office. And when I was lying there in the ditch I didn't even think to pray. I put my trust in . . . God help me in the modified psi factor of a robass!"

"And He did help you," the Jew reminded him. "Or He allowed me to."

"And they all walked by," Thomas groaned. "Even one that was saying his rosary. He went right on by. And then you come along—the good Samaritan."

"Believe me," said the Jew wryly, "if there is one thing I'm not, it's a Samaritan. Now go to sleep again. I will try to find your robass . . . and the other thing."

He had left the room before Thomas could ask him what he meant.

Later that day the Jew—Abraham, his name was—reported that the robass was safely sheltered from the weather behind the inn. Apparently it had been wise enough not to startle him by engaging in conversation.

It was not until the next day that he reported on “the other thing.”

“Believe me, Father,” he said gently, “after nursing you there’s little I don’t know about who you are and why you’re here. Now there are some Christians here I know, and they know me. We trust each other. Jews may still be hated; but no longer, God be praised, by worshipers of the same Lord. So I explained about you. One of them,” he added with a smile, “turned very red.”

“God has forgiven him,” said Thomas. “There were people near—the same people who attacked me. Could he be expected to risk his life for mine?”

“I seem to recall that that is precisely what your Messiah did expect. But who’s being particular? Now that they know who you are, they want to help you. See: they gave me this map for you. The trail is steep and tricky; it’s good you have the robass. They ask just one favor of you: When you come back will you hear their confessions and say Mass? There’s a cave near here where it’s safe.”

“Of course. These friends of yours, they’ve told you about Aquin?”

The Jew hesitated a long time before he said slowly, “Yes . . .”

“And . . . ?”

“Believe me, my friend, I don’t know. So it seems a miracle. It helps to keep their faith alive. My own faith . . . *nu*, it’s lived for a long time on miracles three thousand years old and more. Perhaps if I had heard Aquin himself . . .”

“You don’t mind,” Thomas asked, “if I pray for you, in my faith?”

Abraham grinned. “Pray in good health, Father.”

The not-quite-healed ribs ached agonizingly as he climbed into the foam saddle. The robass stood patiently while he fed

in the coordinates from the map. Not until they were well away from the village did it speak.

"Anyway," it said, "now you're safe for good."

"What do you mean?"

"As soon as we get down from the mountain you deliberately look up a Checker. You turn in the Jew. From then on you are down in the books as a faithful servant of the Technarchy and you have not harmed a hair of the head of one of your own flock."

Thomas snorted. "You're slipping, Satan. That one doesn't even remotely tempt me. It's inconceivable."

"I did best did not I with the breasts. Your God has said it the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak."

"And right now," said Thomas, "the flesh is too weak for even fleshly temptations. Save your breath . . . or whatever it is you use."

They climbed the mountain in silence. The trail indicated by the coordinates was a winding and confused one, obviously designed deliberately to baffle any possible Checkers.

Suddenly Thomas roused himself from his button-rosary (on a coat lent by the Christian who had passed by) with a startled "Hey!" as the robass plunged directly into a heavy thicket of bushes.

"Coordinates say so," the robass stated tersely.

For a moment Thomas felt like the man in the nursery rhyme who fell into a bramble bush and scratched out both his eyes. Then the bushes were gone, and they were plodding along a damp narrow passageway through solid stone, in which even the robass seemed to have some difficulty with his footing.

Then they were in a rocky chamber some four meters high and ten in diameter, and there on a sort of crude stone catafalque lay the uncorrupted body of a man.

Thomas slipped from the foam saddle, groaning as his ribs stabbed him, sank to his knees, and offered up a wordless hymn of gratitude. He smiled at the robass and hoped the psi factor could detect the elements of pity and triumph in that smile.

Then a frown of doubt crossed his face as he approached the body. "In canonization proceedings in the old time," he said, as much to himself as to the robass, "they used to have what they called a devil's advocate, whose duty it was to throw every possible doubt on the evidence."

"You would be well cast in such a role Thomas," said the robass.

"If I were," Thomas muttered, "I'd wonder about caves. Some of them have peculiar properties of preserving bodies by a sort of mummification . . ."

The robass had clumped close to the catafalque. "This body is not mummified," he said. "Do not worry."

"Can the psi factor tell you that much?" Thomas smiled.

"No," said the robass. "But I will show you why Aquin could never be mummified."

He raised his articulated foreleg and brought its hoof down hard on the hand of the body. Thomas cried out with horror at the sacrilege—then stared hard at the crushed hand.

There was no blood, no ichor of embalming, no bruised flesh. Nothing but a shredded skin and beneath it an intricate mass of plastic tubes and metal wires.

The silence was long. Finally the robass said, "It was well that you should know. Only you of course."

"And all the time," Thomas gasped, "my sought-for saint was only your dream . . . the one perfect robot in man's form."

"His maker died and his secrets were lost," the robass said. "No matter we will find them again."

"All for nothing. For less than nothing. The 'miracle' was wrought by the Technarchy."

"When Aquin died," the robass went on, "and put died in quotation marks it was because he suffered some mechanical defects and did not dare have himself repaired because that would reveal his nature. This is for you only to know. Your report of course will be that you found the body of Aquin it was unimpaired and indeed incorruptible. That is the truth and nothing but the truth if it is not the whole truth who is to care.

Let your infallible friend use the report and you will not find him ungrateful I assure you."

"Holy Spirit, give me grace and wisdom," Thomas muttered.

"Your mission has been successful. We will return now the Church will grow and your God will gain many more worshippers to hymn His praise into His nonexistent ears."

"Damn you!" Thomas exclaimed. "And that would be indeed a curse if you had a soul to damn."

"You are certain that I have not," said the robass. "Question mark."

"I know what you are. You are in very truth the devil, prowling about the world seeking the destruction of men. You are the business that prowls in the dark. You are a purely functional robot constructed and fed to tempt me, and the tape of your data is the tape of Screwtape."

"Not to tempt you," said the robass. "Not to destroy you. To guide and save you. Our best calculators indicate a probability of 51.5 per cent that within twenty years you will be the next Pope. If I can teach you wisdom and practicality in your actions the probability can rise as high as 97.2 or very nearly to certainty. Do not you wish to see the Church governed as you know you can govern it. If you report failure on this mission you will be out of favor with your friend who is as even you admit fallible at most times. You will lose the advantages of position and contact that can lead you to the cardinal's red hat even though you may never wear it under the Technarchy and from there to—"

"Stop!" Thomas' face was alight and his eyes aglow with something the psi factor had never detected there before. "It's all the other way round, don't you see? *This* is the triumph! *This* is the perfect ending to the quest!"

The articulated foreleg brushed the injured hand. "This question mark."

"This is *your* dream. This is *your* perfection. And what came of this perfection? This perfect logical brain—this all-purpose brain, not functionally specialized like yours—knew that it was made by man, and its reason forced it to believe that man was made by God. And it saw that its duty lay to man its

maker, and beyond him to his Maker, God. Its duty was to convert man, to augment the glory of God. And it converted by the pure force of its perfect brain!

"Now I understand the name Aquin," he went on to himself. "We've known of Thomas Aquinas, the Angelic Doctor, the perfect reasoner of the church. His writings are lost, but surely somewhere in the world we can find a copy. We can train our young men to develop his reasoning still further. We have trusted too long in faith alone; this is not an age of faith. We must call reason into our service—and Aquin has shown us that perfect reason can lead only to God!"

"Then it is all the more necessary that you increase the probabilities of becoming Pope to carry out this program. Get in the foam saddle we will go back and on the way I will teach you little things that will be useful in making certain—"

"No," said Thomas. "I am not so strong as St. Paul, who could glory in his imperfections and rejoice that he had been given an imp of Satan to buffet him. No; I will rather pray with the Saviour, 'Lead us not into temptation.' I know myself a little. I am weak and full of uncertainties and you are very clever. Go. I'll find my way back alone."

"You are a sick man. Your ribs are broken and they ache. You can never make the trip by yourself you need my help. If you wish you can order me to be silent. It is most necessary to the Church that you get back safely to the Pope with your report you cannot put yourself before the Church."

"Go!" Thomas cried. "Go back to Nicodemus . . . or Judas! That is an order. Obey!"

"You do not think do you that I was really conditioned to obey your orders. I will wait in the village. If you get that far you will rejoice at the sight of me."

The legs of the robass clumped off down the stone passageway. As their sound died away, Thomas fell to his knees beside the body of that which he could hardly help thinking of as St. Aquin the Robot.

His ribs hurt more excruciatingly than ever. The trip alone would be a terrible one . . .

His prayers arose, as the text has it, like clouds of incense,



and as shapeless as those clouds. But through all his thoughts ran the cry of the father of the epileptic in Caesarea Philippi:

*I believe, O Lord; help thou mine unbelief!*



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